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Elizabeth Barrett Browning
Rome. Febra ary. 1859

POETICAL WORKS

OF

LIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

(COMPLETE.)

FROM THE TWELFTH LONDON EDITION.



NEW YORK:
THOMAS Y. CROWELL & CO.,
No. 13 ASTOR PLACE.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THIS edition, including my earlier and later writings, I have endeavored to render as little unworthy as possible of the indulgence of the public. Several poems I would willingly have withdrawn, if it were not almost impossible to extricate what has been once caught and involved in the machinery of the press. The alternative is a request to the generous reader that he may use the weakness of those earlier verses, which no subsequent revision has succeeded in strengthening, less as a reproach to the writer than as a means of marking some progress in her other attempts.

E. B. B.

LONDON, 1856.

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AURORA LEIGH.

A POEM IN NINE BOOKS.

DEDICATION TO JOHN KENYON, Esq.

The words "cousin" and "friend" are constantly recurring in this poem, the last pages of which have been finished under the hospitality of your roof, my own dearest cousin and friend,—cousin and friend in a sense of less equality and greater disinterestedness than "Romney's."

Ending, therefore, and preparing once more to quit England, I venture to leave in your hands this book, the most mature of my works, and the one into which my highest convictions upon life and art have entered; that as, through my various efforts in literature, and steps in life, you have believed in me, borne with me, and been generous to me, far beyond the common uses of mere relationship or sympathy of mind, so you may kindly accept in sight of the public this poor sign of esteem, gratitude, and affection from

Your unforgetting

E. B. B.

39 DEVONSHIRE PLACE,
Oct. 17, 1856.

AURORA LEIGH.

FIRST BOOK.

Or writing many books there is no
end;
And I, who have written much in
prose and verse
For others' uses, will write now for
mine,—
Will write my story for my better
self,
As when you paint your portrait for a
friend,
Who keeps it in a drawer, and looks
at it

Long after he has ceased to love you,
just
To hold together what he was and is.
I, writing thus, am still what men call
young:
I have not so far left the coasts of life
To travel inland, that I cannot hear
That murmur of the outer Infinite
Which unweaned babies smile at in
their sleep
When wondered at for smiling; not
so far,
But still I catch my mother at her
post

Beside the nursery-door, with finger up,
 "Hush, hush, here's too much noise!" while her sweet eyes
 Leap forward, taking part against her word
 In the child's riot. Still I sit, and feel
 My father's slow hand, when she had left us both,
 Stroke out my childish curls across his knee,
 And hear Assunta's daily jest (she knew
 He liked it better than a better jest)
 Inquire how many golden scudi went
 To make such ringlets. O my father's hand,
 Stroke heavily, heavily, the poor hair down,
 Draw, press the child's head closer to thy knee!
 I'm still too young, too young, to sit alone.
 I write. My mother was a Florentine,
 Whose rare blue eyes were shut from seeing me
 When scarcely I was four years old; my life
 A poor spark snatched up from a failing lamp
 Which went out therefore. She was weak and frail;
 She could not bear the joy of giving life;
 The mother's rapture slew her. If her kiss
 Had left a longer weight upon my lips,
 It might have steadied the uneasy breath,
 And reconciled and fraternized my soul
 With the new order. As it was, indeed,
 I felt a mother-want about the world,
 And still went seeking, like a bleating lamb
 Left out at night in shutting up the fold,—
 As restless as a nest-deserted bird
 Grown chill through something being away, though what
 It knows not. I, Aurora Leigh, was born
 To make my father sadder, and myself
 Not overjoyous, truly. Women know
 The way to rear up children (to be just);

They know a simple, merry, tender knack
 Of tying sashes, fitting baby-shoes,
 And stringing pretty words that make no sense,
 And kissing full sense into empty words;
 Which things are corals to cut life upon,
 Although such trifles: children learn by such,
 Love's holy earnest in a pretty play,
 And get not over-early solemnized,
 But seeing, as in a rose-bush, Love's Divine,
 Which burns and hurts not,—not a single bloom,—
 Become aware and unafraid of love.
 Such good do mothers. Fathers love as well,—
 Mine did, I know, — but still with heavier brains,
 And wills more consciously responsible,
 And not as wisely, since less foolishly:
 So mothers have God's license to be missed.
 My father was an austere Englishman,
 Who, after a dry lifetime spent at home
 In college-learning, law, and parish talk,
 Was flooded with a passion ui ware,
 His whole provisioned and complacent past
 Drowned out from him that moment.
 As he stood
 In Florence, where he had come to spend a month,
 And note the secret of Da Vinci drains,
 He musing somewhat absently perhaps
 Some English question . . . whether men should pay
 The unpopular but necessary tax
 With left or right hand — in the alien sun
 In that great square of the Santissima
 There drifted past him (scarcely marked enough
 To move his comfortable island scorn)
 A train of priestly banners, cross and psalm,
 The white-veiled, rose-crowned maidens holding up
 Tall tapers, weighty for such wrists, aslant

To the blue luminous tremor of the air,
And letting drop the white wax as they went
To eat the bishop's wafer at the church;
From which long trail of chanting priests and girls
A face flashed like a cymbal on his face,
And shook with silent clangor brain and heart,
Transfiguring him to music. Thus, even thus,
He, too, received his sacramental gift
With eucharistic meanings; for he loved.

And thus beloved, she died. I've heard it said
That but to see him, in the first surprise
Of widower and father, nursing me,
Unmothered little child of four years old,—
His large man's hands afraid to touch my curls,
As if the gold would tarnish, his grave lips
Contriving such a miserable smile
As if he knew needs must, or I should die,
And yet 'twas hard,—would almost make the stones cry out for pity. There's a verse he set

In Santa Croce to her memory,—
"Weep for an infant too young to weep much
When death removed this mother,"—
stops the mirth
lay on women's faces when they walk,
With rosy children hanging on their gowns,

Under the cloister to escape the sun
That scorches in the piazza. After which
He left our Florence, and made haste to hide
 Himself, his Prattling child, and silent grief,
 Among the mountains above Pelago;
 Because unmothered babes, he thought, had need
 Of mother-nature more than others use,
 And Pan's white goats, with udders warm, and full

Of mystic contemplations, come to feed
Poor milkless lips of orphans like his own.
Such scholar-scrapes he talked, I've heard from friends;
For even prosaic men who wear grief long
Will get to wear it as a hat aside
With a flower stuck in't. Father, then, and child,
We lived among the mountains many years,
God's silence on the outside of the house,
And we who did not speak too loud within,
And old Assunta to make up the fire,
Crossing herself whene'er a sudden flame
Which lightened from the firewood made alive
That picture of my mother on the wall.

The painter drew it after she was dead;
And when the face was finished, throat and hands,
Her cameriera carried him, in hate
Of the English-fashioned shroud, the last brocade
She dressed in at the Pitti. "He should paint
No sadder thing than that," she swore, "to wrong
Her poor signora." Therefore very strange
The effect was. I, a little child, would crouch
For hours upon the floor, with knees drawn up,
And gaze across them, half in terror, half
In adoration, at the picture there,—
That swan-like supernatural white life
Just sailing upward from the red stiff silk
Which seemed to have no part in it, nor power
To keep it from quite breaking out of bounds.
For hours I sat and stared. Assunta's awe
And my poor father's melancholy eyes
Still pointed that way. That way went my thoughts

When wandering beyond sight. And
as I grew
In years, I mixed, confused, uncon-
sciously,
Whatever I last read, or heard, or
dreamed,—
Abhorrent, admirable, beautiful,
Pathetical, or ghastly, or grotesque,—
With still that face . . . which did
not therefore change,
But kept the mystic level of all
forms,
Hates, fears, and admirations—was
by turns
Ghost, fiend, and angel, fairy, witch,
and sprite;
A dauntless Muse who eyes a dread-
ful Fate;
A loving Psyche who loses sight of
Love;
A still Medusa with mild milky
brows,
All curled and all clothed upon with
snakes
Whose slime falls fast as sweat will;
or anon
Our Lady of the Passion, stabbed
with swords
Where the Babe sucked; or Lamia in
her first
Moonlighted pallor, ere she shrunk
and blinked,
And shuddering wriggled down to
the unclean;
Or my own mother, leaving her last
smile
In her last kiss upon the baby-mouth
My father pushed down on the bed
for that;
Or my dead mother, without smile or
kiss,
Buried at Florence. All which im-
ages,
Concentred on the picture, glassed
themselves
Before my meditative childhood, as
The incoherencies of change and
death
Are represented fully, mixed and
merged,
In the smooth fair mystery of perpet-
ual life.

And while I stared away my childish
wits
Upon my mother's picture, (ah, poor
child!)
My father, who through love had
suddenly

Thrown off the old conventions,
broken loose
From chin-bands of the soul, like
Lazarus,
Yet had no time to learn to talk and
walk,
Or grow anew familiar with the
sun;
Who had reached to freedom, not to
action, lived,
But lived as one entranced, with
thoughts, not aims;
Whom love had unmade from a com-
mon man,
But not completed to an uncommon
man,—
My father taught me what he had
learnt the best
Before he died, and left me,—grief
and love.
And seeing we had books among the
hills,
Strong words of counselling souls
confederate
With vocal pines and waters, out of
books
He taught me all the ignorance of
men,
And how God laughs in heaven when
any man
Says, “Here I'm learned; this I un-
derstand;
In that I am never caught at fault or
doubt.”
He sent the schools to school, demon-
strating
A fool will pass for such through o^t
mistake,
While a philosopher will pass i^t
such
Through said mistakes being ve-
tured in the gross,
And heaped up to a system.

I am like
They tell me, my dear father. Broa^r
er brows
Howbeit, upon a slenderer under-
growth
Of delicate features,—paler, near a
grave;
But then my mother's smile br^owed
up the whole,
And makes it better sometimes than
itself.

So nine full years our days were b^rown
with God
Among his mountains. I was ju^rn
thirteen,

“il growing like the plants from unseen roots
In tongue-tied springs, and suddenly awoke
To full life and life’s needs and agonies,
With an intense, strong, struggling heart, beside
A stone-dead father. Life, struck sharp on death,
Makes awful lightning. His last word was, “Love—
Love, my child, love, love!” —(then he had done with grief)
“Love, my child.” Ere I answered, he was gone,
And none was left to love in all the world.

There ended childhood. What succeeded next
I recollect, as, after fevers, men
Thread back the passage of delirium,
Missing the turn still, baffled by the door;
Smooth, endless days, notched here and there with knives,
A weary, wormy darkness, spurred i’ the flank
With flame, that it should eat and end itself
Like some tormented scorpion. Then at last
I do remember clearly how there came
A stranger with authority, not right (I thought not), who commanded, caught me up
From old Assunta’s neck; how with a shriek
He let me go, while I, with ears too full
Of my father’s silence to shriek back a word,
Was all a child’s astonishment at grief,
Stared at the wharf-edge where she stood and moaned.
My poor Assunta, where she stood and moaned!
The white walls, the blue hills, my Italy,
Drawn backward from the shuddering steamer-deck,
Like one in anger drawing back her skirts
Which suppliants catch at. Then the bitter sea inexorably pushed between us both,

And, sweeping up the ship with my despair,
Threw us out as a pasture to the stars.

Ten nights and days we voyaged on the deep;
Ten nights and days without the common face
Of any day or night; the moon and sun
Cut off from the green reconciling earth,
To starve into a blind ferocity,
And glare unnatural; the very sky (Dropping its bell-net down upon the sea

As if no human heart should ‘scape alive),
Bedraggled with the desolating salt,
Until it seemed no more than holy heaven
To which my father went. All new and strange;
The universe turned stranger, for a child.

Then land! —then England! oh, the frosty cliffs
Looked cold upon me. Could I find a home
Among those mean red houses through the fog?
And when I heard my father’s language first
From alien lips which had no kiss for mine,
I wept aloud, then laughed, then wept, then wept;
And some one near me said the child was mad
Through much sea-sickness. The train swept us on.
Was this my father’s England? the great isle?
The ground seemed cut up from the fellowship
Of verdure, field from field, as man from man:
The skies themselves looked low and positive,
As almost you could touch them with a hand,
And dared to do it, they were so far off
From God’s celestial crystals; all things blurred
And dull and vague. Did Shakspeare and his mates

Absorb the light here? Not a hill or
stone
With heart to strike a radiant color
up,
Or active outline on the indifferent
air.

I think I see my father's sister stand
Upon the hall-step of her country-
house
To give me welcome. She stood
straight and calm,
Her somewhat narrow forehead braid-
ed tight
As if for taming accidental thoughts
From possible pulses; brown hair
pricked with gray.
By frigid use of life (she was not old,
Although my father's elder by a
year);
A nose drawn sharply, yet in delicate
lines;
A close mild mouth, a little soured
about
The ends, through speaking unrequit-
ed loves
Or, peradventure, niggardly half-
truths;
Eyes of no color—once they might
have smiled,
But never, never, have forgot them-
selves
In smiling; cheeks in which was yet
a rose
Of perished summers, like a rose in a
book,
Kept more for ruth than pleasure—
if past bloom,
Past fading also.

She had lived, we'll say,
A harmless life, she called a virtuous
life.
A quiet life, which was not life at all
(But that, she had not lived enough
to know),
Between the vicar and the county
squires,
The lord-lieutenant looking down
sometimes
From the empyrean to assure their
souls
Against chance vulgarisms, and, in
the abyss,
The apothecary looked on once a year
To prove their soundness of humility.
The poor-club exercised her Christian
gifts
Of knitting stockings, stitching petti-
coats,

Because we are of one flesh, after all,
And need one flannel (with a proper
sense
Of difference in the quality); and
still
The book-club, guarded from your
modern trick
Of shaking dangerous questions from
the crease,
Preserved her intellectual. She had
lived
A sort of cage-bird life, born in a
cage,
Accounting that to leap from perch to
perch
Was act and joy enough for any bird.
Dear Heaven, how silly are the things
that live
In thickets, and eat berries!

I, alas!
A wild bird scarcely fledged, was
brought to her cage,
And she was there to meet me. Very
kind.
Bring the clean water, give out the
fresh seed.

She stood upon the steps to welcome
me,
Calm, in black garb. I clung about
her neck:
Young babes, who catch at every
shred of wool
To draw the new light closer, catch
and cling
Less blindly. In my ears my father's
word
Hummed ignorantly, as the sea in
shells,—
“Love, love, my child.” She, black
there with my grief,
Might feel my love: she was his sis-
ter once.
I clung to her. A moment she seemed
moved,
Kissed me with cold lips, suffered me
to cling,
And drew me feebly through the hall
into
The room she sate in. There, with
some strange spasm
Of pain and passion, she wrung loose
my hands
Impersonally, and held me at arm's-
length,
And with two gray-steel naked-bladed
eyes
Searched through my face, — ay,
stabbed it through and through,

Through brows and cheeks and chin,
as if to find
A wicked murderer in my innocent
face,
If not here, there perhaps. Then,
drawing breath,
She struggled for her ordinary calm,
And missed it rather; told me not to
shrink,
As if she had told me not to lie or
swear,
“She loved my father, and would love
me too
As long as I deserved it.” Very
kind.

I understood her meaning afterward:
She thought to find my mother in my
face,
And questioned it for that. For she,
my aunt,
Had loved my father truly, as she
could,
And hated with the gall of gentle
souls
My Tuscan mother, who had fooled
away
A wise man from wise courses, a good
man
From obvious duties, and depriving
her,
His sister, of the household prece-
dence,
Had wronged his tenants, robbed his
native land,
And made him mad, alike by life and
death,
In love and sorrow. She had pored
for years
What sort of woman could be suitable
To her sort of hate, to entertain it
with,
And so her very curiosity
Became hate too, and all the idealism
She ever used in life was used for
hate,
Till hate, so nourished, did exceed at
last
The love from which it grew in
strength and heat,
And wrinkled her smooth conscience
with a sense
Of disputable virtue (say not sin)
When Christian doctrine was enforced
at church.

And thus my father's sister was to me
My mother's hater. From that day
she did

Her duty to me (I appreciate it
In her own word as spoken to herself),
Her duty in large measure, well
pressed out,
But measured always. She was gen-
erous, bland,
More courteous than was tender, gave
me still
The first place, as if fearful that
God's saints
Would look down suddenly and say,
“Herein
You missed a point, I think, through
lack of love.”
Alas! a mother never is afraid
Of speaking angrily to any child,
Since love, she knows, is justified of
love.

And I—I was a good child, on the
whole,
A meek and manageable child. Why
not?
I did not live to have the faults of
life.
There seemed more true life in my
father's grave
Than in all England. Since that
threw me off
Who fain would cleave (his latest
will, they say,
Consigned me to his land), I only
thought
Of lying quiet there, where I was
thrown
Like seaweed on the rocks, and suf-
fering her
To prick me to a pattern with her pin,
Fibre from fibre, delicate leaf from
leaf,
And dry out from my drowned anat-
omy
The last sea-salt left in me. So it was.
I broke the copious curls upon my
head
In braids, because she liked smooth-
ordered hair.
I left off saying my sweet Tuscan
words
Which still at any stirring of the
heart
Came up to float across the English
phrase
As lilies (*Bene* or *Che che*), because
She liked my father's child to speak
his tongue.
I learnt the collects and the cate-
chism,

The creeds, from Athanasius back to
Nice,
The Articles, the Tracts *against* the
times
(By no means Buonaventure's "Prick
of Love"),
And various popular synopses of
Inhuman doctrines never taught by
John,
Because she liked instructed piety.
I learnt my complement of classic
French
(Kept pure of Balzac and neologism)
And German also, since she liked a
range
Of liberal education,—tongues, not
books.
I learnt a little algebra, a little
Of the mathematics, brushed with
extreme flounce
The circle of the sciences, because
She misliked women who are frivo-
lous.
I learnt the royal genealogies
Of Oviedo, the internal laws
Of the Burnese Empire, by how many
feet
Mount Chimborazo outsoars Tene-
rife,
What navigable river joins itself
To Lara, and what census of the year
five
Was taken at Klagenfurt, because she
liked
A general insight into useful facts.
I learnt much music, such as would
have been
As quite impossible in Johnson's day
As still it might be wished, fine
sleights of hand
And unimagined fingering, shuffling
off
The hearer's soul through hurricanes
of notes
To a noisy Tophet; and I drew . . .
costumes
From French engravings, nereids
neatly draped
(With smirks of simmering godship).
I washed in
Landscapes from nature (rather say,
washed out).
I danced the polka and Cellarius,
Spun glass, stuffed birds, and mod-
elled flowers in wax,
Because she liked accomplishments
in girls.
I read a score of books on woman-
hood,

To prove, if women do not think at
all,
They may teach thinking (to a
maiden-aunt,
Or else the author),—books that
boldly assert
Their right of comprehending hus-
band's talk
When not too deep, and even of an-
swering
With pretty "may it please you," or
"so it is;"
Their rapid insight and fine aptitude,
Particular worth and general mission-
ariness,
As long as they keep quiet by the fire,
And never say "no" when the world
says "ay,"
For that is fatal; their angelic reach
Of virtue, chiefly used to sit and darn,
And fatten household sinners; their,
in brief,
Potential faculty in every thing
Of abdicating power in it: she owned
She liked a woman to be womanly,
And English women, she thanked
God, and sighed
(Some people always sigh in thanking
God),
Were models to the universe. And
last
I learnt cross-stitch, because she did
not like
To see me wear the night with empty
hands,
A-doing nothing. So my shepherdess
Was something, after all (the pastoral
saints)
Be praised for't), leaning lovelorn,
with pink eyes
To match her shoes, when I mistook
the silks,
Her head uncrushed by that round
weight of hat
So strangely similar to the tortoise-
shell
Which slew the tragic poet.
By the way,
The works of women are symbolical.
We sew, sew, prick our fingers, dull
our sight,
Producing what? A pair of slippers,
sir,
To put on when you're weary, or a
stool
To stumble over, and vex you . . .
"Curse that stool!"
Or else, at best, a cushion, where you
lean

And sleep, and dream of something
we are not,
But would be for your sake. Alas,
alas !
This hurts most, this,— that after all
we are paid
The worth of our work, perhaps.
In looking down
Those years of education (to return)
I wonder if Brinvilliers suffered more
In the water-torture . . . flood suc-
ceeding flood
To drench the incapable throat, and
split the veins . . .
Than I did. Certain of your feebler
souls
Go out in such a process; many pine
To a sick, inodorous light; my own
endured:
I had relations in the Unseen, and
drew
The elemental nutriment and heat
From nature, as earth feels the sun
at nights,
Or as a babe sucks surely in the dark
I kept the life thrust on me, on the
outside
Of the inner life, with all its ample
room
For heart and lungs, for will and in-
tellect,
Inviolable by conventions. God,
I thank thee for that grace of thine !

At first

I felt no life which was not patience;
did
The thing she bade me, without heed
to a thing
Beyond it; sat in just the chair she
placed,
With back against the window, to ex-
clude
The sight of the great lime-tree on
the lawn,
Which seemed to have come on pur-
pose from the woods
To bring the house a message,—ay,
and walked
Demurely in her carpeted low rooms,
As if I should not, harkening my own
steps,
Misdoubt I was alive. I read her
books;
Was civil to her cousin, Romney
Leigh;
Gave ear to her vicar, tea to her visit-
ors,
And heard them whisper, when I
changed a cup

(I blushed for joy at that), — “The
Italian child,
For all her blue eyes and her quiet
ways,
Thrives ill in England. She is paler
yet
Than when we came the last time:
she will die.”

“Will die.” My cousin Romney Leigh
blushed too,
With sudden anger, and approaching
me,
Said low between his teeth, “You’re
wicked now !
You wish to die and leave the world
a-dusk
For others, with your naughty light
blown out ?”

I looked into his face defyingly.
He might have known, that, being
what I was,
‘Twas natural to like to get away
As far as dead folk can; and then, in-
deed,
Some people make no trouble when
they die.
He turned and went abruptly,
slammed the door,
And shut his dog out.

Romney, Romney Leigh.

I have not named my cousin hitherto,
And yet I used him as a sort of
friend;
My elder by few years, but cold and
shy
And absent . . . tender, when he
thought of it,
Which scarcely was imperative, grave
betimes,
As well as early master of Leigh Hall,
Whereof the nightmare sate upon his
youth
Repressing all its seasonable delights,
And agonizing with a ghastly sense
Of universal hideous want and wrong
To incriminate possession. When he
came

From college to the country, very oft
He crossed the hill on visits to my
aunt,
With gifts of blue grapes from the
hothouses,
A book in one hand,— mere statistics
(if
I chanced to lift the cover), count of
all
The goats whose beards grow sprout-
ing down toward hell

Against God's separative judgment-hour.
 And she, — she almost loved him ; even allowed
 That sometimes he should seem to sigh my way :
 It made him easier to be pitiful,
 And sighing was his gift. So, undisturbed
 At whiles, she let him shut my music up,
 And push my needles down, and lead me out
 To see in that south angle of the house
 The figs grow black as if by a Tuscan rock,
 On some light pretext. She would turn her head
 At other moments, go to fetch a thing,
 And leave me breath enough to speak with him,
 For his sake: it was simple. Sometimes too
 He would have saved me utterly, it seemed,
 He stood and looked so. Once he stood so near
 He dropped a sudden hand upon my head
 Bent down on woman's work, as soft as rain ;
 But then I rose, and shook it off as fire, —
 The stranger's touch that took my father's place,
 Yet dared seem soft.

I used him for a friend
 Before I ever knew him for a friend.
 'Twas better, 'twas worse also, afterward :
 We came so close, we saw our differences
 Too intimately. Always Romney Leigh
 Was looking for the worms, I for the gods.
 A godlike nature his: the gods look down,
 Incurious of themselves; and certainly
 'Tis well I should remember, how, those days,
 I was a worm too, and he looked on me.

A little by his act perhaps, yet more
 By something in me, surely not my will,

I did not die; but slowly, as one in swoon,
 To whom life creeps back in the form of death,
 With a sense of separation, a blind pain
 Of blank obstruction, and a roar i' the ears
 Of visionary chariots which retreat As earth grows clearer . . . slowly, by degrees,
 I woke, rose up . . . where was I ? in the world ;
 For uses therefore I must count worth while.

I had a little chamber in the house, As green as any privet-hedge a bird Might choose to build in, though the nest itself Could show but dead-brown sticks and straws. The walls Were green ; the carpet was pure green; the straight Small bed was curtained greenly ; and the folds Hung green about the window, which let in The outdoor world with all its greenery. You could not push your head out, and escape A dash of dawn-dew from the honeysuckle, But so you were baptized into the grace And privilege of seeing. . . . First the lime (I had enough there, of the lime, be sure : My morning-dream was often hummed away By the bees in it); past the lime the lawn, Which, after sweeping broadly round the house, Went trickling through the shrubberies in a stream Of tender turf, and wore and lost itself Among the acacias, over which you saw The irregular line of elms by the deep lane Which stopped the grounds, and damned the overflow Of arbutus and laurel. Out of sight The lane was; sunk so deep, no foreign tramp,

Nor drover of wild ponies out of Wales,
Could guess if lady's hall or tenant's lodge
Dispensed such odors, though his stick, well crooked,
Might reach the lowest trail of blossoming brier
Which dipped upon the wall. Behind the elms,
And through their tops, you saw the folded hills
Striped up and down with hedges (burly oaks)
Projecting from the line to show themselves),
Through which my cousin Romney's chimneys smoked,
As still as when a silent mouth in frost
Breathes, showing where the woodlands hid Leigh Hall;
While, far above, a jut of table-land,
A promontory without water, stretched.
You could not catch it if the days were thick,
Or took it for a cloud; but, otherwise,
The vigorous sun would catch it up at eve,
And use it for an anvil till he had filled
The shelves of heaven with burning thunderbolts,
Protesting against night and darkness; then,
When all his setting trouble was resolved
To a trance of passive glory, you might see
In apparition on the golden sky, (Alas, my Giotto's background!) the sheep run
Along the fine clear outline, small as mice
That run along a witch's scarlet thread.
Not a grand nature; not my chestnut woods
Of Vallombrosa, cleaving by the spurs
To the precipices; not my headlong leaps
Of waters, that cry out for joy or fear
In leaping through the palpitating pines,

Like a white soul tossed out to eternity
With thrills of time upon it; not, indeed,
My multitudinous mountains, sitting in
The magic circle, with the mutual touch
Electric, panting from their full deep hearts
Beneath the influent heavens, and waiting for
Communion and commission. Italy Is one thing, England one.
On English ground You understand the letter, — ere the fall
How Adam lived in a garden. All the fields
Are tied up fast with hedges, nose-gay-like;
The hills are crumpled plains, the plains parterres;
The trees round, woolly, ready to be clipped;
And if you seek for any wilderness, You find at best a park. A nature tamed,
And grown domestic like a barn-door fowl,
Which does not awe you with its claws and beak,
Nor tempt you to an eyry too high up,
But which in cackling sets you thinking of
Your eggs to-morrow at breakfast, in the pause
Of finer meditation.
Rather say, A sweet familiar nature, stealing in
As a dog might, or child, to touch your hand,
Or pluck your gown, and humbly mind you so
Of presence and affection, excellent For inner uses, from the things without.
I could not be unthankful, I who was Entreated thus, and holpen. In the room
I speak of, ere the house was well awake,
And also after it was well asleep, I sate alone, and drew the blessing in
Of all that nature. With a gradual step,

A stir among the leaves, a breath, a ray,
It came in softly, while the angels made
A place for it beside me. The moon came,
And swept my chamber clean of foolish thoughts.
The sun came, saying, "Shall I lift this light
Against the lime-tree, and you will not look?
I make the birds sing: listen!—but, for you,
God never hears your voice, excepting when
You lie upon the bed at nights, and weep."

Then something moved me. Then I wakened up, More slowly than I verily write now; But wholly, at last, I wakened, opened wide The window and my soul, and let the airs And outdoor sights sweep gradual gospels in, Regenerating what I was. O Life! How oft we throw it off, and think, "Enough, Enough of life in so much!—here's a cause For rupture; herein we must break with Life, Or be ourselves unworthy; here we are wronged, Maimed, spoiled for aspiration: farewell, Life!" And so, as foward babes, we hide our eyes And think all ended. Then Life calls to us In some transformed, apocalyptic voice, Above us, or below us, or around: Perhaps we name it Nature's voice, or Love's, Tricking ourselves, because we are more ashamed To own our compensations than our griefs: Still Life's voice; still we make our peace with Life.

And I, so young then, was not sullen. Soon I used to get up early just to sit

And watch the morning quicken in the gray, And hear the silence open like a flower, Leaf after leaf, and stroke with listless hand The woodbine through the window, till at last I came to do it with a sort of love, At foolish unaware: whereat I smiled, A melancholy smile, to catch myself Smiling for joy. Capacity for joy Admits temptation. It seemed, next, worth while To dodge the sharp sword set against my life, To slip down stairs through all the sleepy house, As mute as any dream there, and escape, As a soul from the body, out of doors, Glide through the shrubberies, drop into the lane, And wander on the hills an hour or two, Then back again, before the house should stir.

Or else I sate on in my chamber green, And lived my life, and thought my thoughts, and prayed My prayers without the vicar; read my books, Without considering whether they were fit To do me good. Mark there. We get no good By being ungenerous, even to a book, And calculating profits,—so much help By so much reading. It is rather when We gloriously forget ourselves, and plunge Soul-forward, headlong, into a book's profound, Impassioned for its beauty and salt of truth,— 'Tis then we get the right good from a book.

I read much. What my father taught before From many a volume, love re-emphasized Upon the selfsame pages: Theophrast

Grew tender with the memory of his eyes,
And *Aelian* made mine wet. The trick of Greek
And Latin he had taught me, as he would
Have taught me wrestling, or the game of fives,
If such he had known,—most like a shipwrecked man,
Who heaps his single platter with goats' cheese
And scarlet berries; or like any man
Who loves but one, and so gives all at once,
Because he has it, rather than because
He counts it worthy. Thus my father gave;
And thus, as did the women formerly
By young Achilles, when they pinned a veil
Across the boy's audacious front, and swept
With tuneful laughs the silver-fretted rocks,
He wrapt his little daughter in his large
Man's doublet, careless did it fit or no.

But after I had read for memory
I read for hope. The path my father's foot
Had trod me out (which suddenly broke off
What time he dropped the wallet of the flesh
And passed) alone I carried on, and set
My child-heart 'gainst the thorny underwood,
To reach the grassy shelter of the trees.
Ah babe i' the wood, without a brother-babe!
My own self-pity, like the redbreast bird,
Flies back to cover all that past with leaves.

Sublimest danger, over which none weeps,
When any young wayfaring soul goes forth
Alone, unconscious of the perilous road,
The day-sun dazzling in his limpid eyes,

To thrust his own way, he an alien, through
The world of books! Ah, you!—you think it fine,
You clap hands—"A fair day!"—you cheer him on,
As if the worst could happen were to rest
Too long beside a fountain. Yet behold,
Behold!—the world of books is still the world,
And worldlings in it are less merciful
And more puissant. For the wicked there
Are winged like angels; every knife that strikes
Is edged from elemental fire to assail A spiritual life; the beautiful seems right
By force of beauty, and the feeble wrong
Because of weakness; power is justified,
Though armed against St. Michael; many a crown
Covers bald foreheads. In the book-world, true,
There's no lack, neither, of God's saints and kings,
That shake the ashes of the grave aside
From their calm locks, and, undiscomfited,
Look steadfast truths against Time's changing mask.
True, many a prophet teaches in the roads:
True, many a seer pulls down the flaming heavens
Upon his own head in strong martyrdom
In order to light men a moment's space.
But stay! Who judges? Who distinguishes
'Twixt Saul and Nahash justly, at first sight,
And leaves King Saul precisely at the sin,
To serve King David? Who discerns at once
The sound of the trumpets, when the trumpets blow
For Alaric as well as Charlemagne?
Who judges wizards, and can tell true sees?
From conjurers? The child, there?
Would you leave

That child to wander in a battle-field,
And push his innocent smile against
the guns?
Or even in a catacomb, his torch
Grown ragged in the fluttering air,
and all
The dark a-mutter round him? not a
child.

I read books bad and good,—some
bad and good
At once (good aims not always make
good books;
Well-tempered spades turn up ill-
smelling soils
In digging vineyards even); books
that prove
God's being so definitely, that man's
doubt
Grows self-defined the other side the
line,
Made atheist by suggestion; moral
books,
Exasperating to license; genial books,
Discounting from the human dignity;
And merry books, which set you
weeping when
The sun shines; ay, and melancholy
books,
Which make you laugh that any one
should weep
In this disjointed life for one wrong
more.

The world of books is still the world,
I write;
And both worlds have God's provi-
dence, thank God,
To keep and hearten. With some
struggle, indeed,
Among the breakers, some hard swim-
ming through
The deeps, I lost breath in my soul
sometimes,
And cried, "God save me, if there's
any God!"
But, even so, God saved me; and,
being dashed
From error on to error, every turn
Still brought me nearer to the central
truth.

I thought so. All this anguish in the
thick
Of men's opinions . . . press and
counterpress,
Now up, now down, now underfoot,
and now

Emergent . . . all the best of it, per-
haps,
But throws you back upon a noble
trust
And use of your own instinct,—
merely proves
Pure reason stronger than bare infer-
ence
At strongest. Try it,—fix against
heaven's wall
The scaling-ladders of school logic,
mount
Step by step! —sight goes faster; that
still ray
Which strikes out from you, how, you
cannot tell,
And why, you know not, (did you
eliminate,
That such as you indeed should ana-
lyze?)
Goes straight and fast as light, and
high as God.

The cygnet finds the water; but the
man
Is born in ignorance of his element,
And feels out, blind at first, disorgan-
ized
By sin i' the blood, his spirit-insight
dulled
And crossed by his sensations. Pres-
ently
He feels it quicken in the dark some-
times,
When, mark, be reverent, be obed-
ient,
For such dumb motions of imperfect
life
Are oracles of vital Deity,
Attesting the Hercaster. Let who
says
"The soul's a clean white paper,"
rather say,
A palimpsest, a prophet's holograph,
Defiled, erased, and covered by a
monk's,—
The apocalypse, by a Longus! poring
on
Which obscene text, we may discern,
perhaps,
Some fair, fine trace of what was
written once,
Some upstroke of an alpha and omega
Expressing the old scripture.
Books, books, books!
I had found the secret of a garret-
room,
Piled high with cases in my father's
name,

Piled high, packed large, where, creeping
in and out
Among the giant fossils of my past,
Like some small nimble mouse be-
tween the ribs
Of a mastodon, I nibbled here and
there
At this or that box, pulling through
the gap
In heats of terror, haste, victorious
joy,
The first book first. And how I felt
it beat
Under my pillow in the morning's
dark,
An hour before the sun would let me
read!
My books! At last, because the time
was ripe,
I chanced upon the poets.

As the earth
Plunges in fury, when the internal
fires
I have reached and pricked her heart,
and throwing flat
The marts and temples, the triumphal
gates
And towers of observation, clears her-
self
To elemental freedom — thus, my
soul,
At poetry's divine first finger-touch,
Let go conventions, and sprang up
surprised,
Convicted of the great eternities
Before two worlds.

What's this, Aurora Leigh,
You write so of the poets, and not
laugh?
Those virtuous liars, dreamers after
dark,
Exaggerators of the sun and moon,
And soothsayers in a tea-cup?

I write so
Of the only truth-tellers now left to
God,
The only speakers of essential truth,
Opposed to relative, comparative,
And temporal truths; the only holders
by
His sun-skirts, through conventional
gray glooms;
The only teachers who instruct man-
kind,
From just a shadow on a charnel-
wall,
To find man's veritable stature out
Erect, sublime, — the measure of a
man;

And that's the measure of an angel,
says
The apostle. Ay, and while your
common men
Lay telegraphs, gauge railroads, reign,
reap, dine,
And dust the flaunting carpets of the
world
For kings to walk on, or our presi-
dent,
The poet suddenly will catch them up
With his voice like a thunder,—
“This is soul,
This is life, this word is being said in
heaven,
Here's God down on us! what are you
about?”
How all those workers start amid
their work,
Look round, look up, and feel, a mo-
ment's space,
That carpet-dusting, though a pretty
trade,
Is not the imperative labor, after all!
My own best poets, am I one with
you,
That thus I love you, — or but one
through love?
Does all this smell of thyme about my
feet
Conclude my visit to your holy hill
In personal presence, or but testify
The rustling of your vesture through
my dreams
With influent odors? When my joy
and pain,
My thought and aspiration, like the
stops
Of pipe or flute, are absolutely dumb,
Unless melodious, do you play on me,
My pipers? — and if, sooth, you did
not blow,
Would no sound come? or is the mu-
sic mine,
As a man's voice or breath is called
his own,
Inbreathed by the Life-breather?
There's a doubt
For cloudy seasons!

But the sun was high

When first I felt my pulses set them-
selves
For concord; when the rhythmic tur-
bulence
Of blood and brain swept outward
upon words,
As wind upon the alders, blanching
them

By turning up their under-natures till
They trembled in dilation. O delight
And triumph of the poet, who would
say
A man's mere "yes," a woman's com-
mon "no,"
A little human hope of that or this,
And says the word so that it burns
you through
With a special revelation, shakes the
heart
Of all the men and women in the
world,
As if one came back from the dead,
and spoke,
With eyes too happy, a familiar thing
Become divine i' the utterance ! while
for him
The poet, speaker, he expands with
joy;
The palpitating angel in his flesh
Thrills inly with consenting fellow-
ship
To those innumerable spirits who sun
themselves
Outside of time.
O life ! O poetry,
— Which means life in life! cognizant
of life
Beyond this blood-beat, passionate for
truth
Beyond these senses! — poetry, my
life,
My eagle, with both grappling feet
still hot
From Zeus's thunder, who hast ravin-
ished me
Away from all the shepherds, sheep,
and dogs,
And set me in the Olympian roar and
round
Of luminous faces for a cup-bearer,
To keep the mouths of all the god-
heads moist
For everlasting laughter, — I myself
Half drunk across the beaker with
their eyes!
How those gods look!
Enough so, Ganymede,
We shall not bear above a round or
two.
We drop the golden cup at Here's
foot,
And swoon back to the earth, and
find ourselves
Face down among the pine-cones, cold
with dew,
While the dogs bark, and many a
shepherd scoffs,

" What's now come to the youth ? "
Such ups and downs
Have poets.
Am I such indeed ? The name
Is royal, and to sign it like a queen
Is what I dare not, — though some
royal blood
Would seem to tingle in me now and
then,
With sense of power and ache, — with
imposthumes
And manias usual to the race. How-
beit
I dare not: 'tis too easy to go mad
And ape a Bourbon in a crown of
straws:
The thing's too common.
Many fervent souls
Strike rhyme on rhyme, who would
strike steel on steel,
If steel had offered, in a restless heat
Of doing something. Many tender
souls
Have strung their losses on a rhyming
thread,
As children, cowslips: the more pains
they take,
The work more withers. Young men,
ay, and maids,
Too often sow their wild oats in tame
verse,
Before they sit down under their own
vine,
And live for use. Alas ! near all the
birds
Will sing at dawn ; and yet we do not
take
The chattering swallow for the holy
lark.
In those days, though, I never an-
alyzed,
Not even myself. Analysis comes
late.
You catch a sight of Nature earliest
In full front sun-face, and your eye-
lids wink
And drop before the wonder of't : you
miss
The form, through seeing the light. I
lived those days,
And wrote because I lived — unli-
censed else ;
My heart beat in my brain. Life's vio-
lent flood
Abolished bounds ; and which my
neighbor's field,
Which mine, what mattered ? It is
thus in youth.

We play at leap-frog over the god Term;
The love within us and the love without
Are mixed, confounded: if we are loved, or love,
We scarce distinguish. Thus with other power;
Being acted on and acting seem the same.
In that first onrush of life's chariot-wheels,
We know not if the forests move, or we.

And so, like most young poets, in a flush
Of individual life I poured myself
Along the veins of others, and achieved
Mere lifeless imitations of live verse,
And made the living answer for the dead,
Profaning nature. "Touch not, do not taste,
Nor handle," — we're too legal, who write young :
We beat the phorminx till we hurt our thumbs,
As if still ignorant of counterpoint ;
We call the Muse, — " O Muse, beignant Muse ! " —
As if we had seen her purple-braided head,
With the eyes in it, start between the boughs
As often as a stag's. What make-believe,
With so much earnest! what effete results
From virile efforts ! what cold wire-drawn odes,
From such white heats ! — bucolies,
Where the cows would scare the writer if they splashed the mud
In lashing off the flies ; didactics, driven
Against the heels of what the master said ;
And counterfeiting epics, shrill with trumps
A babe might blow between two straining cheeks
Of bubbled rose, to make his mother laugh ;
And elegiae griefs, and songs of love,
Like cast-off nosegays picked up on the road,

The worse for being warm: all these things, writ
On happy mornings, with a morning heart,
That leaps for love, is active for resolve, Weak for art only. Oft the ancient forms
Will thrill, indeed, in carrying the young blood.
The wine-skins, now and then a little warped,
Will crack even, as the new wine gurgles in.
Spare the old bottles ! Spill not the new wine.

By Keats's soul, the man who never stepped
In gradual progress like another man, But, turning grandly on his central self,
Ensphered himself in twenty perfect years,
And died, not young (the life of a long life)
Distilled to a mere drop, falling like a tear
Upon the world's cold cheek to make it burn
Forever), — by that strong excepted soul
I count it strange and hard to understand
That nearly all young poets should write old ;
That Pope was sexagenary at sixteen, And beardless Byron academical,
And so with others. It may be, perhaps,
Such have not settled long and deep enough
In trance to attain to clairvoyance ; and still
The memory mixes with the vision, spoils,
And works it turbid. Or perhaps, again,
In order to discover the Muse-Sphinx, The melancholy desert must sweep round,
Behind you as before. For me, I wrote
False poems, like the rest, and thought them true
Because myself was true in writing them
I, peradventure, have writ true ones since
With less complacence.

But I could not hide
My quickening inner life from those
at watch.
They saw a light at a window now
and then
They had not set there : who had set
it there ?
My father's sister started when she
caught
My soul agaze in my eyes. She could
not say
I had no business with a sort of soul ;
But plainly she objected, and de-
murred
That souls were dangerous things to
carry straight
Through all the spilt saltpetre of the
world.
She said sometimes, " Aurora, have
you done
Your task this morning ? have you
read that book ?
And are you ready for the crochet
here ? " —
As if she said, " I know there's some-
thing wrong ;
I know I have not ground you down
enough
To flatten and bake you to a whole-
some crust,
For household uses and proprieties,
Before the rain has got into my barn,
And set the grains a-sprouting. What,
you're green
With outdoor impudence ? you al-
most grow ? "
To which I answered, " Would she
hear my task,
And verify my abstract of the book ?
Or should I sit down to the crochet-
work ?
Was such her pleasure ? " Then I
sat and teased
The patient needle till it spilt the
thread,
Which oozed off from it in meander-
ing lace
From hour to hour. I was not there-
fore sad ;
My soul was singing at a work apart,
Behind the wall of sense, as safe from
harm
As sings the lark when sucked up out
of sight
In vortices of glory and blue air.
And so, through forced work and
spontaneous work,
The inner life informed the outer life,

Reduced the irregular blood to a set-
tled rhythm,
Made cool the forehead with fresh-
sprinkling dreams,
And rounding to the spheric soul the
thin,
Pined body, struck a color up the
cheeks,
Though somewhat faint. I clinched
my brows across
My blue eyes, greatening in the look-
ing-glass,
And said, " We'll live, Aurora ! we'll
be strong.
The dogs are on us; but we will not
die."
Whoever lives true life will love true
love.
I learnt to love that England. Very
oft,
Before the day was born, or otherwise
Through secret windings of the after-
noons,
I threw my hunters off, and plunged
myself
Among the deep hills, as a hunted
stag
Will take the waters, shivering with
the fear
And passion of the course. And
when at last
Escaped, so many a green slope built
on slope
Betwixt me and the enemy's house
behind,
I dared to rest, or wander in a rest
Made sweeter for the step upon the
grass,
And view the ground's most gentle
dimplement
(As if God's finger touched, but did
not press,
In making England); such an up-and-
down
Of verdure, nothing too much up or
down,
A ripple of land; such little hills the
sky
Can stoop to tenderly, and the wheat-
fields climb;
Such nooks of valleys lined with
orchises,
Fed full of noises by invisible
streams;
And open pastures where you scarce-
ly tell
White daisies from white dew; at
intervals

The mythic oaks and elm-trees standing out
Self-poised upon their prodigy of shade,—
I thought my father's land was worthy too
Of being my Shakspeare's.
Very oft alone,
Unlicensed; not unfrequently with leave
To walk the third with Romney and his friend
The rising painter, Vincent Carington,
Whom men judge hardly as bee-boneted,
Because he holds that; paint a body well,
You paint a soul by implication, like
The grand first Master. Pleasant walks; for if
He said, "When I was last in Italy," It sounded as an instrument that's played
Too far off for the tune, and yet it's fine To listen.

Often we walked only two, If cousin Romney pleased to walk with me.
We read, or talked, or quarrelled, as it chanced.
We were not lovers, nor even friends well matched:
Say, rather, scholars upon different tracks,
And thinkers disagreed,—he, overfull
Of what is, and I, haply, overbold
For what might be.

But then the thrushes sang, And shook my pulses and the elm's new leaves;
At which I turned, and held my finger up,
And bade him mark, that howsoe'er the world
Went ill, as he related, certainly
The thrushes still sang in it. At the word
His brow would soften; and he bore with me
In melancholy patience, not unkind,
While, breaking into voluble ecstasy, I flattered all the beauteous country round,
As poets use,—the skies, the clouds, the fields,
The happy violets hiding from the roads

The primroses run down to, carrying gold;
The tangled hedgerows, where the cows push out
Impatient horns and tolerant churning mouths
'Twixt dripping ash-boughs; hedge-rows all alive
With birds and gnats, and large white butterflies
Which look as if the Mayflower had caught life,
And palpitated forth upon the wind;
Hills, vales, woods, netted in a silver mist;
Farms, granges, doubled up among the hills;
And cattle grazing in the watered vales;
And cottage-chimneys smoking from the woods;
And cottage-gardens smelling everywhere,
Confused with smell of orchards.
"See!" I said,
"And see! is not God with us on the earth?
And shall we put him down by aught we do?
Who says there's nothing for the poor and vile
Save poverty and wickedness? Behold!"
And ankle-deep in English grass I leaped,
And clapped my hands, and called all very fair.

In the beginning, when God called all good,
Even then, was evil near us, it is writ;
But we indeed who call things good and fair,
The evil is upon us while we speak:
Deliver us from evil, let us pray.

SECOND BOOK.

TIMES followed one another. Came a morn
I stood upon the brink of twenty years,
And looked before and after, as I stood
Woman and artist, either incomplete,

Both credulous of completion. There
I held
The whole creation in my little cup,
And smiled with thirsty lips before I
drank
"Good health to you and me, sweet
neighbor mine,
And all these peoples."

I was glad that day;
The June was in me, with its multi-
tudes
Of nightingales all singing in the
dark,
And rosebuds reddening where the
calyx split.
I felt so young, so strong, so sure of
God,
So glad, I could not choose be very
wise,
And, old at twenty, was inclined to
pull
My childhood backward in a childish
jest
To see the face o't once more, and
farewell!
In which fantastic mood I bounded
forth
At early morning, would not wait so
long
As even to snatch my bonnet by the
strings,
But, brushing a green trail across the
lawn
With my gown in the dew, took will
and way
Among the acacias of the shrubber-
ies,
To fly my fancies in the open air,
And keep my birthday till my aunt
awoke
To stop good dreams. Meanwhile I
murmured on
As honeyed bees keep humming to
themselves,
"The worthiest poets have remained
uncrowned
Till death has bleached their fore-
heads to the bone;
And so with me it must be, unless I
prove
Unworthy of the grand adversity;
And certainly I would not fail so
much.
What, therefore, if I crown myself to-
day
In sport, not pride, to learn the feel of
it
Before my brows be numbed as
Dante's own

To all the tender pricking of such
leaves?
Such leaves! what leaves?
I pulled the branches down
To choose from.
"Not the bay! I choose no bay,
(The fates deny us if we are overbold)
Nor myrtle, which means chiefly love;
and love
Is something awful, which one dares
not touch
So early o' mornings. This verbena
strains
The point of passionate fragrance;
and hard by
This guelder-rose, at far too slight a
beck
Of the wind, will toss about her
flower-apples.
Ah, there's my choice, that ivy on the
wall,
That headlong ivy! not a leaf will
grow
But thinking of a wreath. Large
leaves, smooth leaves,
Serrated like my vines, and half as
green.
I like such ivy, bold to leap a height
'Twas strong to climb; as good to
grow on graves
As twist about a thyrsus; pretty too,
(And that's not ill) when twisted
round a comb."

Thus speaking to myself, half singing
it,
Because some thoughts are fashioned
like a bell,
To ring with once being touched, I
drew a wreath
Drenched, blinding me with dew,
across my brow,
And, fastening it behind so, turning,
faced
. . . My public! — cousin Romney —
with a mouth
Twice graver than his eyes.
I stood there fixed,
My arms up, like the caryatid, sole
Of some abolished temple, helplessly
Persistent in a gesture which derides
A former purpose. Yet my blush was
flame,
As if from flax, not stone.
"Aurora Leigh,
The earliest of Auroras!"
Hand stretched out
I clasped, as shipwrecked men will
clasp a hand,



"I stood there fixed,
My arms up, like the caryatid"—Page 20.

Indifferent to the sort of palm. The tide
Had caught me at my pastime, writing down

My foolish name too near upon the sea,
Which drowned me with a blush as foolish. "You,
My cousin!"

The smile died out in his eyes,
And dropped upon his lips, a cold dead weight,
For just a moment, "Here's a book I found;

No name writ on it—poems, by the form;
Some Greek upon the margin; lady's Greek

Without the accents. Read it? Not a word.

I saw at once the thing had witchcraft in't,
Whereof the reading calls up dangerous spirits:

I rather bring it to the witch." "My book.
You found it" . . .

"In the hollow by the stream
That beech leans down into, of which you said
The Oread in it has a Naiad's heart,
And pines for waters."

"Thank you." "Thanks to you
My cousin, that I have seen you not too much
Witch, scholar, poet, dreamer, and the rest,
To be a woman also."

With a glance
The smile rose in his eyes again, and touched

The ivy on my forehead, light as air.
I answered gravely, "Poets needs must be,

Or men or women, more's the pity." "Ah,

But men, and still less women, happily,

Scarce need be poets. Keep to the green wreath,

Since even dreaming of the stone and bronze

Brings headaches, pretty cousin, and defiles

The clean white morning dresses." "So you judge,

Because I love the beautiful I must Love pleasure chiefly, and be overcharged

For ease and whiteness! well, you know the world,
And only miss your cousin: 'tis not much.

But learn this: I would rather take my part
With God's dead, who afford to walk in white,

Yet spread his glory, than keep quiet here,
And gather up my feet from even a step,
For fear to soil my gown in so much dust.

I choose to walk at all risks. Here, if heads

That hold a rhythmic thought must ache perforce,
For my part I choose headaches,—and to-day's my birthday."

"Dear Aurora, choose instead To cure them. You have balsams."

"I perceive. The headache is too noble for my sex.

You think the heartache would sound deconcert,
Since that's the woman's special, proper ache,
And altogether tolerable, except To a woman."

Saying which, I loosed my wreath,
And swinging it beside me as I walked,

Half petulant, half playful, as we walked,
I sent a sidelong look to find his thought,

As falcon set on falconer's finger may,

With sidelong head, and startled, braving eye,
Which means, "You'll see, you'll see! I'll soon take flight.

You shall not hinder." He, as shaking out

His hand, and answering, "Fly, then," did not speak,
Except by such a gesture. Silently We paced, until, just coming into sight

Of the house-windows, he abruptly caught
At one end of the swinging wreath,

and said, "Aurora!" There I stopped short, breath and all.

"Aurora, let's be serious, and throw by

This game of head and heart. Life means, be sure,
 Both heart and head, — both active,
 both complete,
 And both in earnest. Men and women make
 The world, as head and heart make
 human life.
 Work, man, work, woman, since
 thero's work to do
 In this beleaguered earth for head
 and heart;
 And thought can never do the work
 of love:
 But work for ends, I mean for uses,
 not
 For such sleek fringes (do you call
 them ends,
 Still less God's glory ?) as we sew our-
 selves
 Upon the velvet of those baldaquins
 Held 'twixt us and the sun. That
 book of yours
 I have not read a page of; but I toss
 A rose up — it falls calyx down, you
 see !
 The chances are, that being a woman,
 young
 And pure, with such a pair of large,
 calm eyes,
 You write as well . . . and ill . . .
 upon the whole,
 As other women. If as well, what
 then ?
 If even a little better . . . still, what
 then ?
 We want the best in art now, or no
 art.
 The time is done for facile settings-up
 Of minnow-gods, nymphs here, and
 tritons there;
 The polytheists have gone out in
 God,
 That unity of bests. No best, no
 God !
 And so with art, we say. Give art's
 divine,
 Direct, indubitable, real as grief,
 Or, leave us to the grief, we grow our-
 selves
 Divine by overcoming with mere hope
 And most prosaic patience. You,
 you are young
 As Eve with nature's daybreak on
 her face ;
 But this same world you are come to,
 dearest coz,
 Has done with keeping birthdays,
 saves her wreaths

To hang upon her ruins, and forgets
 To rhyme the cry with which she still
 beats back
 Those savage, hungry dogs that hunt
 her down
 To the empty grave of Christ. The
 world's hard pressed:
 The sweat of labor in the early curse
 Has (turning acrid in six thousand
 years)
 Become the sweat of torture. Who
 has time,
 An hour's time . . . think ! — to sit
 upon a bank,
 And hear the cymbal tinkle in white
 hands ?
 When Egypt's slain, I say, let Miriam
 sing ! —
 Before — where's Moses ?"
 " Ah, exactly that.
 Where's Moses ? Is a Moses to be
 found ?
 You'll seek him vainly in the bul-
 rushes,
 While I in vain touch cymbals. Yet
 concede,
 Such sounding brass has done some
 actual good
 (The application in a woman's hand,
 If that were credible, being scarcely
 spoilt),
 In colonizing beehives."

" There it is !
 You play beside a death-bed like a
 child,
 Yet measure to yourself a prophet's
 place
 To teach the living. None of all these
 things
 Can women understand. You gen-
 eralize,
 Oh, nothing, — not even grief ! Your
 quick-breathed hearts,
 So sympathetic to the personal pang,
 Close on each separate knife-stroke,
 yielding up
 A whole life at each wound, incapable
 Of deepening, widening a large lap of
 life
 To hold the world-full woe. The
 human race
 To you means such a child, or such a
 man,
 You saw one morning waiting in the
 cold
 Beside that gate, perhaps. You
 gather up
 A few such cases, and when strong
 sometimes

Will write of factories and of slaves,
as if
Your father were a negro, and your
son
A spinner in the mills. All's yours
and you,
All colored with your blood, or other-
wise
Just nothing to you. Why, I call
you hard
To general suffering. Here's the
world half-blind
With intellectual light, half-brutal-
ized
With civilization, having caught the
plague
In silks from Tarsus, shrieking east
and west
Along a thousand railroads, mad with
pain
And sin too! . . . does one woman
of you all
(You who weep easily) grow pale to
see
This tiger shake his cage? Does one
of you
Stand still from dancing, stop from
stringing pearls,
And pine and die, because of the
great sum
Of universal anguish? Show me a tear
Wet as Cordelia's in eyes bright as
yours,
Because the world is mad. You can-
not count
That you should weep for this ac-
count, not you!
You weep for what you know. A red-
haired child
Sick in a fever, if you touch him
once,
Though but so little as with a finger-
tip,
Will set you weeping; but a million
sick . . .
You could as soon weep for the rule
of three
Or compound fractions. Therefore
this same world
Uncomprehended by you, must re-
main
Uninfluenced by you. Women as
you are,
Mere women, personal and passion-
ate,
You give us doating mothers, and
perfect wives,
Sublime Madonnas, and enduring
saints:

We get no Christ from you, and verily
We shall not get a poet, in my mind."

"With which conclusion you con-
clude" . . . "But this:
That you, Aurora, with the large live
brow
And steady eyelids, cannot conde-
scend
To play at art, as children play at
swords,
To show a pretty spirit, chiefly ad-
mired
Because true action is impossible.
You never can be satisfied with praise
Which men give women when they
judge a book
Not as mere work, but as mere wo-
man's work,
Expressing the comparative respect,
Which means the absolute scorn.
'Oh, excellent!
What grace, what facile turns, what
fluent sweeps,
What delicate discernment . . . al-
most thought!
The book does honor to the sex, we
hold.
Among our female authors we make
room
For this fair writer, and congratulate
The country that produces in these
times
Such women, competent to' . . .
spell." "Stop there,"
I answered, burning through his
thread of talk
With a quick flame of emotion,—
"you have read
My soul, if not my book, and argue
well
I would not condescend . . . we will
not say
To such a kind of praise (a worthless
end
Is praise of all kinds), but to such a
use
Of holy art and golden life. I am
young,
And peradventure weak—you tell
me so—
Through being a woman. And for
all the rest,
Take thanks for justice. I would
rather dance
At fairs on tight-rope, till the babies
dropped

Their gingerbread for joy, than shift
the types
For tolerable verse, intolerable
To men who act and suffer. Better
far
Pursue a frivolous trade by serious
means,
Than a sublime art frivolously.”
 “ You
Choose nobler work than either, O
moist eyes,
And hurrying lips, and heaving heart!
We are young,
Aurora, you and I. The world,—
look round,—
The world we're come to late is
swollen hard
With perished generations and their
sins:
The civilizer's spade grinds horribly
On dead men's bones, and cannot
turn up soil
That's otherwise than fetid. All
success
Proves partial failure; all advance
implies
What's left behind; all triumph,
something crushed
At the chariot-wheels; all govern-
ment, some wrong;
And rich men make the poor, who
curse the rich,
Who agonize together, rich and
poor.
Under and over, in the social spasm
And crisis of the ages. Here's an
age
That makes its own vocation; here
we have stepped
Across the bounds of time; here's
nought to see,
But just the rich man and just Lazarus,
And both in torments with a mediate
gulf,
Though not a hint of Abraham's
bosom. Who,
Being man, Aurora, can stand calmly
by
And view these things, and never
tease his soul
For some great cure? No physic for
this grief,
In all the earth and heavens too?”
 “ You believe
In God, for your part?—ay? that
He who makes
Can make good things from ill things,
best from worst,

As men plant tulips upon dunghills
when
They wish them finest?”
 “ True. A death-heat is
The same as life-heat, to be accurate;
And in all nature is no death at all,
As men account of death, so long as
God
Stands witnessing for life perpetually,
By being just God. That's abstract
truth, I know,
Philosophy, or sympathy with God;
But I, I sympathize with man, not
• God,
(I think I was a man for chiefly this.)
And, when I stand beside a dying
bed,
'Tis death to me. Observe: it had
not much
Consoled the race of mastodons to
know,
Before they went to fossil, that anon
Their place would quicken with the
elephant:
They were not elephants, but masto-
dons;
And I, a man, as men are now, and
not
As men may be hereafter, feel with
men
In the agonizing present.”
 “ Is it so,”
I said, “ my cousin? Is the world so
bad,
While I hear nothing of it through
the trees?
The world was always evil,—but so
bad?”

“ So bad, Aurora. Dear, my soul is
gray
With poring over the long sum of ill;
So much for vice, so much for discon-
tent,
So much for the necessities of power,
So much for the connivances of fear,
Coherent in statistical despairs
With such a total of distracted life...
To see it down in figures on a page,
Plain, silent, clear, as God sees
through the earth
The sense of all' the graves,—that's
terrible
For one who is not God, and cannot
right
The wrong he looks on. May I
choose indeed
But vow away my years, my means,
my aims,

Among the helpers, if there's any help
In such a social strait? The common
blood

That swings along my veins is strong
enough
To draw me to this duty."

Then I spoke :
" I have not stood long on the strand
of life,
And these salt waters have had
scarcely time
To creep so high up as to wet my
feet :
I cannot judge these tides—I shall,
perhaps.
A woman's always younger than a
man
At equal years, because she is disal-
lowed
Maturing by the outdoor sun and air,
And kept in long-clothes past the age
to walk.
Ah, well! I know you men judge
otherwise.

You think a woman ripens as a peach,
In the cheeks, chiefly. Pass it to me
now :

I'm young in age, and younger still,
I think,
As a woman. But a child may say
amen
To a bishop's prayer, and feel the way
it goes.

And I, incapable to loose the knot
Of social questions, can approve, ap-
plaud
August compassion, Christian
thoughts that shoot
Beyond the vulgar white of personal
aims.

Accept my reverence." There he glowed on me
With all his face and eyes. " No
other help?"

Said he, " no more than so?"

" What help?" I asked.
" You'd scorn my help, as Nature's
self, you say,
Has scorned to put her music in my
mouth,
Because a woman's, Do you now
turn round
And ask for what a woman cannot
give?"

" For what she only can, I turn and
ask,"
He answered, catching up my hands
in his,

And dropping on me from his high-
eaved brow
The full weight of his soul. " I ask
for love,
And that, she can ; for life in fellow-
ship
Through bitter duties, that, I know
she can ;
For wifehood—will she?"

" Now," I said, " may God
Be witness 'twixt us two!" and with
the word,
Meseemed I floated into a sudden
light
Above his stature,— " am I proved
too weak
To stand alone, yet strong enough to
bear
Such leaners on my shoulder? poor
to think,
Yet rich enough to sympathize with
thought?
Incompetent to sing, as blackbirds
can,
Yet competent to love, like HIM?"

I paused ;
Perhaps I darkened, as the light-
house will
That turns upon the sea. " It's al-
ways so.
Any thing does for a wife."

" Aurora dear,
And dearly honored," he pressed in
at once
With eager utterance, " you trans-
late me ill.

I do not contradict my thought of you,
Which is most reverent, with another
thought

Found less so. If your sex is weak
for art,
(And I who said so did but honor
you
By using truth in courtship,) it is
strong
For life and duty. Place your fecund
heart
In mine, and let us blossom for the
world
That wants love's color in the gray of
time.
My talk, meanwhile, is arid to you,
ay,
Since all my talk can only set you
where
You look down coldly on the arena-
heaps
Of headless bodies, shapeless, indis-
tinguishable.

The judgment-angel scarce would find
his way
Through such a heap of generalized
distress
To the individual man with lips and
eyes,
Much less Aurora. Ah, my sweet,
come down,
And hand in hand we'll go where
yours shall touch
These victims one by one, till, one by
one,
The formless, nameless trunk of every
man
Shall seem to wear a head with hair
you know,
And every woman catch your moth-
er's face
To melt you into passion."

"I am a girl,"
I answered slowly: "you do well to
name
My mother's face. Though far too
early, alas!
God's hand did interpose 'twixt it
and me,
I know so much of love as used to
shine
In that face and another; just so
much,
No more, indeed, at all. I have not
seen
So much love since, I pray you par-
don me,
As answers even to make a marriage
with
In this cold land of England. What
you love
Is not a woman, Romney, but a cause:
You want a helpmate, not a mistress,
sir;

A wife to help your ends, in her no end.
Your cause is noble, your ends ex-
cellent;
But I, being most unworthy of these
and that,
Do otherwise conceive of love. Fare-
well!"

"Farewell, Aurora? you reject me
thus?"

He said.

"Sir, you were married long ago.
You have a wife already whom you
love,—
Your social theory. Bless you both,
I say.
For my part, I am scarcely meek
enough

To be the handmaid of a lawful
spouse.
Do I look a Hagar, think you?"

"So you jest."

"Nay, so I speak in earnest," I re-
plied.

"You treat of marriage too much like,
at least,
A chief apostle: you would bear with
you
A wife . . . a sister . . . shall we
speak it out?—
A sister of charity."

"Then must it be,
Indeed, farewell? And was I so far
wrong
In hope and in illusion, when I
took
The woman to be nobler than the
man,
Yourself the noblest woman in the
use
And comprehension of what love is,—
love
That generates the likeness of itself
Through all heroic duties? so far
wrong

In saying bluntly, venturing truth on
love,
'Come, human creature, love and
work with me,'
Instead of, 'Lady, thou art wondrous
fair,
And, where the Graces walk before,
the Muse
Will follow at the lightning of their
eyes,
And where the Muse walks, lovers
need to creep:
Turn round and love me, or I die of
love?"

With quiet indignation I broke in,
"You misconceive the question like a
man,
Who sees a woman as the comple-
ment
Of his sex merely. You forget too
much
That every creature, female as the
male,
Stands single in responsible act and
thought
As also in birth and death. Whoever
says
To a loyal woman, 'Love and work
with me,'
Will get fair answers, if the work and
love,

Being good themselves, are good for her,—the best
 She was born for. Women of a softer mood,
 Surprised by men when scarcely awake to life,
 Will sometimes only hear the first word, love,
 And catch up with it any kind of work,
 Indifferent, so that dear love go with it.
 I do not blame such women, though for love
 They pick much oakum: earth's fanatics make
 Too frequently heaven's saints. But *me* your work
 Is not the best for, nor your love the best,
 Nor able to command the kind of work
 For love's sake merely. Ah! you force me, sir,
 To be over-bold in speaking of myself:
 I, too, have my vocation,—work to do,
 The heavens and earth have set me since I changed
 My father's face for theirs, and, though your world
 Were twice as wretched as you represent,
 Most serious work, most necessary work
 As any of the economists'. Reform,
 Make trade a Christian possibility,
 And individual right no general wrong,
 Wipe out earth's furrows of the thine and mine,
 And leave one green for men to play at bowls,
 With innings for them all! . . . what then, indeed,
 If mortals are not greater by the head
 Than any of their prosperities? what then,
 Unless the artist keep up open roads
 Betwixt the seen and unseen, bursting through
 The best of your conventions with his best,
 The speakable, imaginable best
 God bids him speak, to prove what lies beyond
 Both speech and imagination? A starved man

Exceeds a fat beast: we'll not barter, sir,
 The beautiful for barley. And, even so,
 I hold you will not compass your poor ends
 Of barley-feeding and material ease
 Without a poet's individualism
 To work your universal. It takes a soul
 To move a body: it takes a high-souled man
 To move the masses even to a cleaner sty:
 It takes the ideal to blow a hair's breadth off
 The dust of the actual. Ah! your Fouriers failed,
 Because not poets enough to understand
 That life develops from within. For me,
 Perhaps I am not worthy, as you say,
 Of work like this: perhaps a woman's soul
 Aspires, and not creates: yet we aspire,
 And yet I'll try out your perhapses, sir,
 And if I fail . . . why, burn me up my straw
 Like other false works. I'll not ask for grace:
 Your scorn is better, cousin Romney. I
 Who love my art would never wish it lower
 To suit my stature. I may love my art.
 You'll grant that even a woman may love art,
 Seeing that to waste true love on any thing
 Is womanly, past question.” I retain
 The very last word which I said that day,
 As you the creaking of the door, years past,
 Which let upon you such disabling news
 You ever after have been graver. He, His eyes, the motions in his silent mouth,
 Were fiery points on which my words were caught,
 Transfixed forever in my memory
 For his sake, not their own. And yet I know

I did not love him . . . nor he me . . .
 that's sure . . .
 And what I said is unrepented of,
 As truth is always. Yet . . . a princely man —
 If hard to me, heroic for himself.
 He bears down on me through the slanting years,
 The stronger for the distance. If he had loved,
 Ay, loved me, with that retributive face, . . .
 I might have been a common woman now,
 And happier, less known, and less left alone,
 Perhaps a better woman, after all, With chubby children hanging on my neck
 To keep me low and wise. Ah me ! the vines
 That bear such fruit are proud to stoop with it.
 The palm stands upright in a realm of sand.

And I, who spoke the truth then, stand upright, Still worthy of having spoken out the truth,
 By being content I spoke it, though it set
 Him there, me here. Oh, woman's vile remorse,
 To hanker after a mere name, a show, A supposition, a potential love ! Does every man who names love in our lives
 Become a power for that ? Is love's true thing
 So much best to us, that what personates love
 Is next best ? A potential love forsooth ! I'm not so vile. No, no ! He cleaves, I think,
 This man, this image, chiefly for the wrong
 And shock he gave my life in finding me
 Precisely where the devil of my youth Had set me on those mountain peaks of hope,
 All glittering with the dawn-dew, all erect,
 And famished for the noon, exclaiming, while I looked for empire and much tribute,
 "Come,

I have some worthy work for thee below.
 Come, sweep my barns, and keep my hospitals,
 And I will pay thee with a current coin
 Which men give women." As we spoke, the grass Was trod in haste beside us, and my aunt,
 With smile distorted by the sun, — face, voice,
 As much at issue with the summer-day
 As if you brought a candle out of doors, — Broke in with, "Romney, here ! — My child, entreat Your cousin to the house, and have your talk,
 If girls must talk upon their birth-days. Come."

He answered for me calmly, with pale lips
 That seemed to motion for a smile in vain.
 "The talk is ended, madam, where we stand.
 Your brother's daughter has dismissed me here;
 And all my answer can be better said Beneath the trees than wrong by such a word
 Your house's hospitalities. Farewell."

With that he vanished. I could hear his heel Ring bluntly in the lane as down he leapt
 The short way from us. Then a measured speech Withdrew me. "What means this, Aurora Leigh ? My brother's daughter has dismissed my guests ?"

The lion in me felt the keeper's voice Through all its quivering dewlaps: I was quelled Before her, meekened to the child she knew:
 I prayed her pardon, said "I had little thought To give dismissal to a guest of hers In letting go a friend of mine who came

To take me into service as a wife,—
No more than that, indeed."

"No more, no more?
Pray Heaven," she answered, "that
I was not mad.
I could not mean to tell her to her
face
That Romney Leigh had asked me for
a wife,
And I refused him?"

"Did he ask?" I said.
"I think he rather stooped to take
me up
For certain uses which he found to do
For something called a wife. He
never asked."

"What stuff!" she answered. "Are
they queens, these girls?
They must have mantles stitched
with twenty silks,
Spread out upon the ground, before
they'll step
One footstep for the noblest lover
born."

"But I am born," I said with firm-
ness, "I,
To walk another way than his, dear
aunt."

"You walk, you walk! A babe at
thirteen months
Will walk as well as you," she cried
in haste,
"Without a steady finger. Why,
you child,
God help you! you are groping in the
dark,
For all this sunlight. You suppose,
perhaps,
That you, sole offspring of an opulent
man,
Are rich, and free to choose a way to
walk?
You think, and it's a reasonable
thought,
That I, beside, being well to do in
life,
Will leave my handful in my niece's
hand
When death shall paralyze these fin-
gers? Pray,
Pray, child, albeit I know you love
me not,
As if you loved me, that I may not
die;
For when I die and leave you, out
you go,

(Unless I make room for you in my
grave,) Unhoused, unfed, my dear, poor broth-
er's lamb,
(Ah, heaven! that pains) without a
right to crop
A single blade of grass beneath these
trees,
Or cast a lamb's small shadow on the
lawn,
Unfed, unfolded. Ah, my brother,
here's
The fruit you planted in your foreign
loves!
Ay, there's the fruit he planted! Never
look
Astonished at me with your mother's
eyes,
For it was they who set you where
you are,
An undowered orphan. Child, your
father's choice
Of that said mother disinherited
His daughter, his and hers. Men do
not think
Of sons and daughters when they fall
in love,
So much more than of sisters: other-
wise
He would have paused to ponder
what he did,
And shrank before that clause in the
entail
Excluding offspring by a foreign wife,
(The clause set up a hundred years
ago
By a Leigh who wedded a French
dancing-girl,
And had his heart danced over in re-
turn;) But this man shrank at nothing, never
thought
Of you, Aurora, any more than me.
Your mother must have been a pretty
thing,
For all the coarse Italian blacks and
browns.
To make a good man, which my broth-
er was,
Unchar of the duties to his house;
But so it fell indeed. Our cousin
Vane,
Vane Leigh, the father of this Rom-
ney, wrote,
Directly on your birth, to Italy:
'I ask your baby-daughter for my
son,
In whom the entail now merges by
the law,

Betroth her to us out of love, instead
 Of colder reasons, and she shall not lose
 By love or law from henceforth: so he wrote.
 A generous cousin was my cousin Vane.
 Remember how he drew you to his knee
 The year you came here, just before he died,
 And hollowed out his hands to hold your cheeks,
 And wished them redder: you remember Vane?
 And now his son, who represents our house,
 And holds the fiefs and manors in his place,
 To whom reverts my pittance when I die,
 (Except a few books and a pair of shawls)—
 The boy is generous like him, and prepared
 To carry out his kindest word and thought
 To you, Aurora. Yes, a fine young man
 Is Romney Leigh, although the sun of youth
 Has shone too straight upon his brain, I know,
 And fevered him with dreams of doing good
 To good-for-nothing people. But a wife
 Will put all right, and stroke his temples cool
 With healthy touches." . . . I broke in at that.
 I could not lift my heavy heart to breathe
 Till then; but then I raised it, and it fell
 In broken words like these,— "No need to wait:
 The dream of doing good to . . . me, at least,
 Is ended, without waiting for a wife
 To cool the fever for him. We've escaped
 That danger—thank Heaven for it." "You," she cried,
 "Have got a fever. What, I talk and talk
 An hour long to you, I instruct you how

You cannot eat, or drink, or stand, or sit,
 Or even die, like any decent wretch
 In all this unroofed and unfurnished world,
 Without your cousin, and you still maintain
 There's room 'twixt him and you for flirting fans,
 And running knots in eyebrows? You must have
 A pattern lover sighing on his knee?
 You do not count enough a noble heart
 (Above book-patterns) which this very morn
 Unclosed itself in two dear fathers' names
 To embrace your orphaned life? Fie, fie! But stay,
 I write a word, and counteract this sin."
 She would have turned to leave me, but I clung.
 "Oh, sweet my father's sister, hear my word
 Before you write yours. Cousin Vane did well,
 And cousin Romney well, and I well too,
 In casting back with all my strength and will
 The good they meant me. O my God, my God!
 God meant me good, too, when he hindered me
 From saying 'yes' this morning. If you write
 A word, it shall be 'no.' I say no, no!
 I tie up 'no' upon his altar-horns
 Quite out of reach of perjury! At least
 My soul is not a pauper: I can live
 At least my soul's life, without alms from men;
 And if it must be in heaven instead
 Of earth, Let heaven look to it: I am not afraid."
 She seized my hands with both hers, strained them fast,
 And drew her probing and unscrupulous eyes
 Right through me, body and heart.
 "Yet, foolish sweet,

You love this man. I've watched you
when he came,
and when he went, and when we've
talked of him.
I am not old for nothing; I can tell
the weather-signs of love: you love
this man."

Girls blush sometimes because they
are alive,
Half wishing they were dead to save
the shame.
The sudden blush devours them, neck
and brow:
They have drawn too near the fire of
life, like gnats,
And flare up bodily, wings and all.
What then?
Who's sorry for a gnat . . . or girl?
I blushed,
I feel the brand upon my forehead
now.
Strike hot, scar deep, as guiltless
men may feel.
The felon's iron, say, and scorn the
mark
Of what they are not. Most illogical,
Irrational nature of our womanhood,
That blushes one way, feels another
way,
And prays, perhaps, another. After
all,
We cannot be the equal of the male,
Who rules his blood a little.

For although
I blushed indeed, as if I loved the
man,
And her incisive smile, accrediting
That treason of false witness in my
blush,
Did bow me downward like a swathe
of grass.
Below its level that struck me, I at-
test
The conscious skies and all their daily
sunns,
I think I loved him not, — nor then,
nor since,
Nor ever. Do we love the school-
master,
Being busy in the woods? much less,
being poor,
The overseer of the parish? Do we
keep
Our love to pay our debts with?

White and cold
I grew next moment. As my blood
recoiled
From that imputed ignominy, I made

My heart great with it. Then, at last,
I spoke,
Spoke veritable words, but passion-
ate,
Too passionate perhaps . . . ground
up with sobs
To shapeless endings. She let fall
my hands
And took her smile off in sedate dis-
gust,
As peradventure she had touched a
snake,—
A dead snake, mind! — and, turning
round, replied,
"We'll leave Italian manners, if you
please.
I think you had an English father,
child,
And ought to find it possible to speak
A quiet 'yes' or 'no,' like English
girls,
Without convulsions. In another
month
We'll take another answer, — no, or
yes."
With that, she left me in the garden-
walk.

I had a father! yes, but long ago, —
How long it seemed that moment!
Oh, how far,
How far and safe, God, dost thou
keep thy saints,
When once gone from us! We may
call against
The lighted windows of thy fair June
heaven,
Where all the souls are happy, and
not one,
Not even my father, look from work
or play
To ask, "Who is it that cries after us
Below there, in the dusk?" Yet for-
merly
He turned his face upon me quick
enough,
If I said, "Father." Now I might cry
loud:
The little lark reached higher with
his song
Than I with crying. Oh, alone,
alone,
Not troubling any in heaven, nor any
on earth,
I stood there in the garden, and
looked up
The deaf blue sky that brings the
roses out
On such June mornings.

You who keep account
Of crisis and transition in this life,
Set down the first time Nature says
plain "no"
To some "yes" in you, and walks
over you
In gorgeous sweeps of scorn. We all
begin
By singing with the birds, and run-
ning fast
With June days, hand in hand; but
once, for all,
The birds must sing against us, and
the sun
Strike down upon us like a friend's
sword caught
By an enemy to slay us, while we
read
The dear name on the blade which
bites at us!
That's bitter and convincing. After
that,
We seldom doubt that something in
the large,
Smooth order of creation, though no
more
Than haply a man's footstep, has
gone wrong.

Some tears fell down my cheeks, and
then I smiled,
As those smile who have no face in
the world
To smile back to them. I had lost a
friend
In Romney Leigh. The thing was
sure,—a friend
Who had looked at me most gently
now and then,
And spoken of my favorite books,
"our books."
With such a voice! Well, voice and
look were now
More utterly shut out from me, I felt,
Than even my father's. Romney
now was turned
To a benefactor, to a generous man,
Who had tied himself to marry . . .
me, instead
Of such a woman, with low timorous
lids
He lifted with a sudden word one day,
And left, perhaps, for my sake. Ah,
self-tied
By a contract, male Iphigenia bound
At a fatal Aulis for the winds to
change,
(But loose him, they'll not change,) he well might seem

A little cold and dominant in love ;
He had a right to be dogmatical,
This poor, good Romney. Love to
him was made
A simple law-clause. If I married
him,
I should not dare to call my soul my
own
Which so he had bought and paid
for : every thought
And every heart-beat down there in
the bill ;
Not one found honestly deductible
From any use that pleased him ! He
might cut
My body into coins to give away
Among his other paupers ; change
my sons,
While I stood dumb as Griseld, for
black babes
Or piteous foundlings ; might un-
questioned set
My right hand teaching in the ragged
schools,
My left hand washing in the public
baths,
What time my angel of the Ideal
stretched
Both his to me in vain. I could not
claim
The poor right of a mouse in a trap to
squeal,
And take so much as pity from my
self.

Farewell, good Romney ! if I loved
you even,
I could but ill afford to let you be
So generous to me. Farewell, friend,
since friend
Betwixt us two, forsooth, must be a
word
So heavily overladen. And, since
help
Must come to me from those who love
me not,
Farewell, all helpers : I must help
myself,
And am alone from henceforth. Then
I stooped
And lifted the soiled garland from
the earth,
And set it on my head as bitterly
As when the Spanish monarch
crowned the bones
Of his dead love. So be it. I pre-
serve
That crown still, in the drawer
there : 'twas the first ;

rest are like it, those Olympian crowns
run for till we lose sight of the sun
the dust of the racing chariots.

After that, the evening fell, I had a note, which ran, -- "Aurora, sweet Chaldaean, you read meaning backward, like your eastern books, while I am from the west, dear. Read me now little plainer. Did you hate me quite yesterday? I loved you for my part; love you. If I spoke untenderly in morning, my beloved, pardon it, and comprehend me that I loved you so let you on the level of my soul, and overwashed you with the bitter brine some habitual thoughts. Henceforth, my flower, planted out of reach of any such, and lean the side you please with all your leaves. Write woman's verses and dream woman's dreams; but let me feel your perfume in my home to make my sabbath after working-days. Doom out your youth beside me; be my wife."

wrote in answer: "We Chaldaeans discern till further than we read. I know your heart, and shut it like the holy book it is, reserved for mild-eyed saints to pore upon betwixt their prayers at vespers Well, you're right, did not surely hate you yesterday; and yet I do not love you enough to-day I wed you, cousin Romney. Take this word, and let it stop you as a generous man from speaking further. You may tease, indeed, and blow about my feelings, or my leaves; and here's my aunt will help you with east winds,

And break a stalk, perhaps, tormenting me: But certain flowers grow near as deep as trees: And, cousin, you'll not move my root, not you, With all your confluent storms. Then let me grow Within my wayside hedge, and pass your way. This flower has never as much to say to you As the antique tomb which said to travellers, 'Pause,' 'Siste, vuoton.' Ending thus, I sighed.

The next week passed in silence, so the next, And several after: Romney did not come, Nor my aunt chide me. I lived on and on, As if my heart were kept beneath a glass, And everybody stood, all eyes and ears To see and hear it tick. I could not sit, Nor walk, nor take a book, nor lay it down, Nor sew on steadily, nor drop a stitch And a sigh with it, but I felt her looks Still cleaving to me, like the sucking asp To Cleopatra's breast, persistently Through the intermittent pantings.

Being observed When observation is not sympathy Is just being tortured. If she said a word, A "thank you," or an "if it please you, dear," She meant a communion, or at best An exorcism against the devildom Which plainly held me. So with all the house. Susannah could not stand and twist my hair, Without such glancing at the looking-glass To see my face there, that she missed the plait. And John — I never sent my plate for soup, Or did not send it, but the foolish John Resolved the problem, 'twixt his napkin'd thumbs,

Of what was signified by taking soup,
Or choosing mackerel. Neighbors
who dropped in
On morning visits, feeling a joint
wrong,

Smiled admonition, sate uneasily,
And talked with measured, emphasized reserve,
Of parish news, like doctors to the sick,
When not called in,—as if, with leave to speak,
They might say something. Nay, the very dog
Would watch me from his sun-patch on the floor.

In alternation with the large black fly
Not yet in reach of snapping. So I lived.

A Roman died so,—smeared with honey, teased
By insects, stared to torture by the noon;
And many patient souls 'neath English roofs
Have died like Romans. I, in looking back,
Wish only now I had borne the plague of all
With meeker spirits than were rife at Rome.

For on the sixth week the dead sea broke up,
Dashed suddenly through beneath the heel of Him
Who stands upon the sea and earth, and swears
Time shall be nevermore. The clock struck nine
That morning too; no lark was out of tune;
The hidden farms among the hills breathed straight
Their smoke toward heaven; the lime-tree scarcely stirred
Beneath the blue weight of the cloudless sky,
Though still the July air came floating through
The woodbine at my window, in and out,
With touches of the out-door country news
For a bending forehead. There I sate, and wished
That morning-truce of God would last till eve,

Or longer. "Sleep," I thought, "late sleepers; sleep,
And spare me yet the burden of your eyes."

Then suddenly a single ghastly shriek
Tore upward from the bottom of the house.
Like one who wakens in a grave, and shrieks,
The still house seemed to shriek itself alive,
And shudder through its passages and stairs,
With slam of doors and clash of bells.
I sprang,

I stood up in the middle of the room,
And there confronted at my chamber-door
A white face, shivering, ineffectual lips.

"Come, come!" they tried to utter,
and I went.
As if a ghost had drawn me at the point
Of a fiery finger through the uneven dark,
I went with reeling footsteps down the stair,
Nor asked a question.

There she sate, my aunt,
Bolt upright in the chair beside her bed,
Whose pillow had no dint. She had used no bed
For that night's sleeping, yet slept well. My God!
The dumb derision of that gray, peaked face
Concluded something grave against the sun,
Which filled the chamber with its July burst,
When Susan drew the curtains, ignorant
Of who sate open-eyed behind her. They
She sate . . . it sate . . . we said
"she" yesterday . . .
And held a letter with unbroken seal,
As Susan gave it to her hand last night.
All night she had held it. If its news referred
To duchies or to dunghills, not an inch
She'd budge, 'twas obvious, for such worthless odds;

or, though the stars were suns, and
overburned
heir spheric limitations, swallowing
up
like wax the azure spaces, could they
force
those open eyes to wink once. What
last sight
had left them blank and flat so, draw-
ing out
the faculty of vision from the roots,
is nothing more, worth seeing, re-
mained behind?

Were those the eyes that watched me,
worried me?
That dogged me up and down the
hours and days,
A beaten, breathless, miserable soul?
And did I pray, a half-hour back, but
so,
To escape the burden of those eyes?
... those eyes?

"Sleep late," I said?
Why now, indeed, they sleep.
God answers sharp and sudden on
some prayers,
And thrusts the thing we have prayed
for in our face,
A gauntlet with a gift in't. Every
wish
Is like a prayer, with God.

I had my wish,
To read and meditate the thing I
would,
To fashion all my life upon my
thought,
And marry, or not marry. Hence-
forth none
Could disapprove me, vex me, hamper
me.
Full ground-room in this desert new-
ly made,
For Babylon or Balbec, when the
breath,
Now choked with sand, returns for
building towns.

The heir came over on the funeral
day,
And we two cousins met before the
dead
With two pale faces. Was it death,
or life,
That moved us? When the will was
read and done,
The official guests and witnesses
withdrawn,
We rose up, in a silence almost hard,

And looked at one another. Then I
said,

"Farewell, my cousin."

But he touched, just touched
My hatstrings tied for going (at the
door
The carriage stood to take me), and
said low,
His voice a little unsteady through
his smile,
"Sister, viator."

"Is there time," I asked,
"In these last days of railroads, to
stop short,
Like Caesar's chariot (weighing half a
ton,)
On the Appian road, for morals?"
He answered grave, "There is time,"
Inclusive, trust me, of no epitaph
On man or act, my cousin. We have
read
A will which gives you all the per-
sonal goods
And funded moneys of your aunt."

"I thank
Her memory for it. With three hun-
dred pounds,
We buy in England, even, clear
standing-room
To stand and work in. Only two
hours since
I fancied I was poor."

"And, cousin, still
You're richer than you fancy. The
will says,
*Three hundred pounds, and any other
sum
Of which the said testatrix dies pos-
sessed.*
I say she died possessed of other
sums."

"Dear Romney, need we chronicle
the pence?
I'm richer than I thought: that's evi-
dent.
Enough so."

"Listen, rather. You've to do
With business and a cousin," he re-
sumed;

"And both, I fear, need patience.
Here's the fact.
The other sum (there is another
sum,
Unspecified in any will which dates
After possession, yet bequeathed as
much

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And funded moneys of your aunt."

"I thank
Her memory for it. With three hun-
dred pounds,
We buy in England, even, clear
standing-room
To stand and work in. Only two
hours since
I fancied I was poor."

"And, cousin, still
You're richer than you fancy. The
will says,
Three hundred pounds, and any other
sum
Of which the said testatrix dies pos-
sessed.

I say she died possessed of other
sums."

"Dear Romney, need we chronicle
the pence?

I'm richer than I thought: that's evi-
dent.

Enough so."

"Listen, rather. You've to do
With business and a cousin," he re-
sumed;

"And both, I fear, need patience.
Here's the fact.

The other sum (there is another
sum,

Unspecified in any will which dates
After possession, yet bequeathed as
much

And clearly as those said three hundred pounds)
Is thirty thousand. You will have it paid
When? . . . where? My duty troubles you with words."

He struck the iron when the bar was hot:
No wonder if my eyes sent out some sparks.
"Pause there! I thank you. You are delicate
In glozing gifts; but I, who share your blood,
Am rather made for giving, like yourself,
Than taking, like your pensioners. Farewell."

He stopped me with a gesture of calm pride.
"A Leigh," he said, "gives largesse, and gives love;
But glories never: if a Leigh could glaze,
He would not do it, moreover, to a Leigh,
With blood trained up along nine centuries
To hound and hate a lie from eyes like yours.
And now we'll make the rest as clear.
Your aunt
Possessed these moneys."

"You will make it clear,
My cousin, as the honor of us both,
Or one of us speaks vainly. That's not I.
My aunt possessed this sum—inherited
From whom, and when? Bring documents, prove dates."

"Why, now indeed you throw your bonnet off
As if you had time left for a logarithm!
The faith's the want. Dear cousin, give me faith,
And you shall walk this road with silken shoes,
As clean as any lady of our house
Supposed the proudest. Oh, I comprehend
The whole position from your point of sight.
I oust you from your father's halls and lands,

And make you poor by getting rich—that's law;
Considering which, in common circumstance
You would not scruple to accept from me
Some compensation, some sufficiency
Of income—that were justice; but, alas!
I love you—that's mere nature; you reject
My love—that's nature also; and at once
You cannot, from a suitor disallowed,
A hand thrown back, as mine is, into yours,
Receive a doit, a farthing,—not for the world!
That's woman's etiquette, and obviously
Exceeds the claim of nature, law, and right,
Unanswerable to all. I grant, you see,
The case as you conceive it; leave you room
To sweep your ample skirts of womanhood,
While, standing humbly squeezed against the wall,
I own myself excluded from being just,
Restrained from paying indubitable debts,
Because denied from giving you my soul.
That's my misfortune. I submit to it
As if, in some more reasonable age,
Twould not be less inevitable.
Enough.
You'll trust me, cousin, as a gentleman,
To keep your honor, as you count it, pure,
Your scruples (just as if I thought them wise)
Safe, and inviolate from gifts of mine."

I answered mild but earnest: "I believe
In no one's honor which another keeps,
Nor man's nor woman's. As I keep, myself,
My truth and my religion, I depute
No father, though I had one this side death,
Nor brother, though I had twenty, much less you,

Though twice my cousin, and once
Romney Leigh,
To keep my honor pure. You face
to-day
A man who wants instruction, mark
me, not
A woman who wants protection. As
to a man,
Show manhood, speak out plainly,
be precise
With facts and dates. My aunt in-
herited
This sum, you say"—

"I said she died possessed
Of this, dear cousin."
"Not by heritage.
Thank you: we're getting to the facts
at last.
Perhaps she played at commerce with
a ship
Which came in heavy with Austra-
lian gold?
Or touched a lottery with her finger-
end,
Which tumbled on a sudden into her
lap
Some old Rhine tower or principal-
ality?
Perhaps she had to do with a marine
Sub-transatlantic railroad which pre-
pays
As well as presupposes? or perhaps
Some stale ancestral debt was after-
paid
By a hundred years, and took her by
surprise?
You shake your head, my cousin: I
guess ill."

"You need not guess, Aurora, nor de-
ride;
The truth is not afraid of hurting you.
You'll find no cause in all your scrup-
ples, why
Your aunt should cavil at a deed of
gift
"Twixt her and me."

"I thought so—ah! a gift."

"You naturally thought so," he re-
sumed.
"A very natural gift." "A gift, a gift!
Her individual life being stranded
high
Above all want, approaching opu-
lence,
Too haughty was she to accept a
gift

Without some ultimate aim. Ah, ah,
I see! —
A gift intended plainly for her
heirs,
And so accepted . . . if accepted . . .
ah,
Indeed that might be: I am snared
perhaps
Just so. But, cousin, shall I pardon
you,
If thus you have caught me with a
cruel springe?"

He answered gently, "Need you
tremble and pant
Like a netted lioness? Is't my fault,
mine,
That you're a grand wild creature of
the woods,
And hate the stall built for you? Any
way,
Though triply netted, need you glare
at me?
I do not hold the cords of such a net:
You're free from me, Aurora."
"Now may God
Deliver me from this strait! This
gift of yours
Was tendered . . . when? accepted
. . . when?" I asked.
"A month . . . a fortnight since?
Six weeks ago
It was not tendered: by a word she
dropped
I know it was not tendered nor re-
ceived.
When was it? Bring your dates."

"What matters when?
A half-hour ere she died, or a half-
year,
Secured the gift, maintains the heri-
tage
Inviolable with law. As easy pluck
The golden stars from heaven's em-
broidered stole
To pin them on the gray side of this
earth,
As make you poor again, thank
God!"

"Not poor
Nor clean again from henceforth, you
thank God?
Well, sir—I ask you . . . I insist at
need . . .
Vouchsafe the special date, the spe-
cial date."

"The day before her death-day," he
replied,

"The gift was in her hands. We'll
find that deed,
And certify that date to you."

As one
Who has climbed a mountain-height,
and carried up
His own heart climbing, panting, in
his throat
With the toil of the ascent, takes
breath at last,
Looks back in triumph, so I stood
and looked.
"Dear cousin Romney, we have
reached the top
Of this steep question, and may rest,
I think,
But first, I pray you pardon that the
shock
And surge of natural feeling and
event
Has made me oblivious of acquainting
you
That this — this letter (unread, mark,
still sealed)
Was found infolded in the poor dead
hand.
That spirit of hers had gone beyond
the address,
Which could not find her, though you
wrote it clear.
I know your writing, Romney, — rec-
ognize
The open-hearted *A*, the liberal sweep
Of the *G*. Now listen. Let us under-
stand:
You will not find that famous deed
of gift,
Unless you find it in the letter here,
Which, not being mine, I give you
back. Refuse
To take the letter? Well, then, you
and I,
As writer and as heiress, open it
Together, by your leave. Exactly
so:
The words in which the noble offer-
ing's made
Are nobler still, my cousin; and I
own
The proudest and most delicate heart
alive,
Distracted from the measure of the
gift
By such a grace in giving, might ac-
cept
Your largesse without thinking any
more
Of the burthen of it than King Solo-
mon

Considered, when he wore his holy
ring
Charactered over with the ineffable
spell,
How many carats of fine gold made
up
Its money-value. So Leigh gives to
Leigh!
Or rather might have given, observe,
— for that's
The point we come to. Here's a
proof of gift;
But here's no proof, sir, of accep-
tancy,
But, rather, disproof. Death's black
dust, being blown,
Infiltrated through every secret fold
Of this sealed letter by a puff of fate,
Dried up forever the fresh-written
ink,
Annulled the gift, disutilized the
grace,
And left these fragments."

As I spoke, I tore
The paper up and down, and down
and up,
And crosswise, till it fluttered from
my hands,
As forest-leaves, stripped suddenly,
and rapt
By a whirlwind on Valdarno, drop
again,—
Drop slow, and strew the melancholy
ground
Before the amazed hills . . . why so,
indeed,
I'm writing like a poet, somewhat
large
In the type of the image, and exag-
gerate
A small thing with a great thing, top-
ping it;
But then I'm thinking how his eyes
looked, his,
With what despondent and surprised
reproach!
I think the tears were in them as he
looked;
I think the manly mouth just trem-
bled. Then
He broke the silence.
"I may ask, perhaps,
Although no stranger . . . only Rom-
ney Leigh,
Which means still less . . . than Vin-
cent Carrington,
Your plans in going hence, and where
you go,
This cannot be a secret."

To other ways from equal men. But so,
 Even so, we let go hands, my cousin and I,
 And in between us rushed the torrent-world
 To blanch our faces like divided rocks,
 And bar forever mutual sight and touch,
 Except through swirl of spray and all that roar.

THIRD BOOK.

"To-day thou girdest up thy loins thyself,
 And goest where thou wouldest: presently
 Others shall gird thee," said the Lord, "to go
 Where thou wouldest not." He spoke to Peter thus,
 To signify the death which he should die
 When crucified head downward.
 If he spoke to Peter then, he speaks to us the same.
 The word suits many different martyrdoms,
 And signifies a multiform of death,
 Although we scarcely die apostles, we,
 And have mislaid the keys of heaven and earth.
 For 'tis not in mere death that men die most;
 And, after our first girding of the loins
 In youth's fine linen and fair broidery
 To run up hill and meet the rising sun,
 We are apt to sit tired, patient as a fool,
 While others gird us with the violent bands
 Of social figments, feints, and formalisms,
 Reversing our straight nature, lifting up
 Our base needs, keeping down our lofty thoughts,
 Head downward on the cross-sticks of the world.

Yet he can pluck us from that shameful cross.
 God, set our feet low and our forehead high,
 And show us how a man was made to walk!
 Leave the lamp, Susan, and go up to bed:
 The room does very well. I have to write
 Beyond the stroke of midnight. Get away:
 Your steps, forever buzzing in the room,
 Tease me like gnats. Ah, letters! Throw them down
 At once, as I must have them, to be sure,
 Whether I bid you never bring me such
 At such an hour, or bid you. No excuse:
 You choose to bring them, as I choose, perhaps,
 To throw them in the fire. Now get to bed,
 And dream, if possible, I am not cross.
 Why, what a pettish, petty thing I grow!—
 A mere, mere woman, a mere flaccid nerve,
 A kerchief left out all night in the rain,
 Turned soft so,—overtasked and overstrained
 And overlived in this close London life.
 And yet I should be stronger. Never burn
 Your letters, poor Aurora; for they stare
 With red seals from the table, saying each,
 "Here's something that you know not." Out, alas!
 'Tis scarcely that the world's more good and wise,
 Or even straighter and more consequent,
 Since yesterday at this time; yet, again,
 If but one angel spoke from Ararat,
 I should be very sorry not to hear:
 So open all the letters, let me read.
 Blanche Ord, the writer in the "Lady's Fan," .

Requests my judgment on . . . that, afterwards.
 Kate Ward desires the model of my cloak,
 And signs, "Elisha to you." Pringle Sharpe
 Presents his work on "Social Conduct," craves
 A little money for his pressing debts . . .
 From me, who scarce have money for my needs;
 Art's fiery chariot which we journey in
 Being apt to singe our singing-robes to holes,
 Although you ask me for my cloak, Kate Ward.
 Here's Rudgely knows it, editor and scribe:
 He's "forced to marry where his heart is not,
 Because the purse lacks where he lost his heart."
 Ah — lost it because no one picked it up:
 That's really loss (and passable impudence).
 My critic Hammond flatters prettily, And wants another volume like the last.
 My critic Belfair wants another book Entirely different, which will sell, (and live?)
 A striking book, yet not a startling book,
 The public blames originalities, (You must not pump spring-water unawares
 Upon a gracious public full of nerves:) Good things, not subtle, new yet orthodox.
 As easy reading as the dog-eared page That's fingered by said public fifty years,
 Since first taught spelling by its grandmother,
 And yet a revelation in some sort: That's hard, my critic Belfair. So — what next?
 My critic Stokes objects to abstract thoughts.
 "Call a man John, a woman Joan," says he
 "And do not prate so of *humanities*;" Whereat I call my critic simply Stokes.
 My critic Jobson recommends more mirth,

Because a cheerful genius suits the times,
 And all true poets laugh unquenchably Like Shakspere and the gods. That's very hard.
 The gods may laugh, and Shakspere; Dante smiled With such a needy heart on two pale lips,
 We cry, "Weep, rather, Dante." Poems are Men, if true poems; and who dares proclaim At any man's door, "Here, 'tis understood The thunder fell last week and killed a wife, And scared a sickly husband: what of that?
 Get up, be merry, shout, and clap your hands, Because a cheerful genius suits the times?
 None says so to the man; and why, indeed, Should any to the poem? A ninth seal;
 The apocalypse is drawing to a close. Ha — this from Vincent Carrington, — "Dear friend, I want good counsel. Will you lend me wings To raise me to the subject in a sketch I'll bring to-morrow — may I? — at eleven?
 A poet's only born to turn to use, So save you! for the world . . . and Carrington."
 (Writ after.) "Have you heard of Romney Leigh, Beyond what's said of him in newspapers, His phalansteries there, his speeches here, His pamphlets, pleas, and statements everywhere?
 He dropped me long ago; but no one drops A golden apple, though, indeed, one day You hinted that, but jested. Well, at least You know Lord Howe, who sees him . . . whom he sees, And *you* see, and I hate to see, — for Howe Stands high upon the brink of theories,

Observes the swimmers, and cries,
 'Very fine!' But keeps dry linen equally,—unlike
 That gallant breaster, Romney.
 Strange it is,
 Such sudden madness seizing a young
 man
 To make earth over again, while I'm
 content
 To make the pictures. Let me bring
 the sketch:
 A tiptoe Danae, overbold and hot,
 Both arms afame to meet her wish-
 ing Jove
 Halfway, and burn him faster down;
 the face
 And breasts upturned and straining,
 the loose locks
 All glowing with the anticipated gold.
 Or here's another on the self-same
 theme.
 She lies here, flat upon her prison-
 floor,
 The long hair swathed about her to
 the heel
 Like wet seaweed. You dimly see
 her through
 The glittering haze of that prodigious
 rain,
 Half blotted out of nature by a love
 As heavy as fate. I'll bring you
 either sketch.
 I think, myself, the second indicates
 More passion."

Surely. Self is put away,
 And calm with abdication. She is
 Jove,
 And no more Danae—greater thus.
 Perhaps
 The painter symbolizes unaware
 Two states of the recipient artist-
 soul,
 One, forward, personal, wanting rever-
 ence,
 Because aspiring only. We'll be
 calm,
 And know, that, when indeed our
 Joves come down,
 We all turn stiller than we have ever
 been.

Kind Vincent Carrington. I'll let
 him come.
 He talks of Florence, and may say a
 word
 Of something as it chanced seven
 years ago,—
 A hedgehog in the path, or a lame
 bird,

In those green country walks, in that
 good time
 When certainly I was so misera-
 ble . . .
 I seem to have missed a blessing ever
 since.

The music soars within the little lark,
 And the lark soars. It is not thus
 with men.
 We do not make our places with our
 strains,
 Content, while they rise, to remain
 behind
 Alone on earth, instead of so in heav-
 en.
 No matter: I bear on my broken tale.

When Romney Leigh and I had
 parted thus,
 I took a chamber up three flights of
 stairs
 Not far from being as steep as some
 larks climb,
 And there, in a certain house in Ken-
 sington,
 Three years I lived and worked. Get
 leave to work
 In this world—"tis the best you get
 at all;
 For God, in cursing, gives us better
 gifts
 Than men in benediction. God says,
 "Sweat
 For foreheads;" men say, "Crowns."
 And so we are crowned,
 Ay, gashed by some tormenting circle
 of steel
 Which snaps with a secret spring.
 Get work, get work!
 Be sure 'tis better than what you work
 to get.

Serene, and unafraid of solitude,
 I worked the short days out, and
 watched the sun
 On lurid morns or monstrous after-
 noons
 (Like some Druidic idol's fiery brass,
 With fixed unflickering outline of
 dead heat,
 From which the blood of wretches
 pent inside
 Seems oozing forth to incarnadine the
 air)
 Push out through fog with his dilated
 disk,
 And startle the slant roofs and chim-
 ney-pots

With splashes of fierce color. Or I
 saw
 Fog only — the great tawny weltering
 fog —
 Involve the passive city, strangle it
 Alive, and draw it off into the void, —
 Spires, bridges, streets, and squares, —
 as if a sponge
 Had wiped out London, or as noon
 and night
 Had clapped together, and utterly
 struck out
 The intermediate time, undoing them-
 selves
 In the act. Your city poets see such
 things
 Not despicable. Mountains of the
 south,
 When, drunk and mad with elemental
 wines
 They rend the seamless mist, and
 stand up bare,
 Make fewer singers, haply. No one
 sings,
 Descending Sinai: on Parnassus-
 mount
 You take a mule to climb, and not a
 muse,
 Except in fable and figure: forests
 chant
 Their anthems to themselves, and
 leave you dumb.
 But sit in London at the day's de-
 cline,
 And view the city perish in the
 mist
 Like Pharaoh's armaments in the
 deep Red Sea,
 The chariots, horsemen, footmen, all
 the host,
 Sucked down and choked to silence —
 then, surprised
 By a sudden sense of vision and of
 tune,
 You feel as conquerors, though you
 did not fight;
 And you and Israel's other singing
 girls,
 Ay, Miriam with them, sing the song
 you choose.

I worked with patience, which means
 almost power.
 I did some excellent things indiffer-
 ently,
 Some bad things excellently. Both
 were praised,
 The latter loudest. And by such a
 time

That I myself had set them down as
 sins
 Scarce worth the price of sackcloth,
 week by week
 Arrived some letter through the sedu-
 lous post,
 Like these I've read, and yet dissimi-
 lar,
 With pretty maiden seals, — initials
 twined
 Of lilies, or a heart marked *Emily*,
 (Convicting Emily of being all heart;)
 Or rarer tokens from young bache-
 lors,
 Who wrote from college with the
 same goosequill,
 Suppose, they had just been plucked
 of, and a snatch
 From Horace, "Collegisse juvat,"
 set
 Upon the first page. Many a letter,
 signed
 Or unsigned, showing the writers at
 eighteen
 Had lived too long, although a muse
 should help
 Their dawn by holding candles, —
 compliments
 To smile or sigh at. Such could pass
 with me
 No more than coins from Moscow cir-
 culate
 At Paris: would ten roubles buy a
 tag
 Of ribbon on the boulevard, worth a
 sou?
 I smiled that all this youth should
 love me, sighed
 That such a love could scarcely raise
 them up
 To love what was more worthy than
 myself;
 Then sighed again, again, less gener-
 ously,
 To think the very love they lavished
 so
 Proved me inferior. The strong loved
 me not,
 And he . . . my cousin Romney . . .
 did not write.
 I felt the silent finger of his scorn
 Prick every bubble of my frivolous
 fame
 As my breath blew it, and resolve it
 back
 To the air it came from. Oh, I justi-
 fied
 The measure he had taken of my
 height:

The thing was plain—he was not wrong a line;
I played at art, made thrusts with a toy-sword,
Amused the lads and maidens.
Came a sigh
Deep, hoarse with resolution,—I would work
To better ends, or play in earnest.
“Heavens,
I think I should be almost popular
If this went on!”—I ripped my verses up,
And found no blood upon the rapier’s point;
The heart in them was just an embryo’s heart,
Which never yet had beat, that it should die;
Just gasps of make-believe galvanic life;
Mere tones, inorganized to any tune.
And yet I felt it in me where it burnt,
Like those hot fire-seeds of creation held
In Jove’s clenched palm before the worlds were sown;
But I—I was not Juno even! my hand
Was shut in weak convulsion, woman’s ill;
And when I yearned to loose a finger—
—lo,
The nerve revolted. ’Tis the same even now:
This hand may never haply open large,
Before the spark is quenched, or the palm charred,
To prove the power not else than by the pain.

It burnt, it burns—my whole life burnt with it;
And light, not sunlight and not torch-light, flashed
My steps out through the slow and difficult road.
I had grown distrustful of too forward springs,
The season’s books in drear significance
Of morals, dropping round me. Lively books?
The ash has livelier verdure than the yew;

And yet the yew’s green longer, and alone
Found worthy of the holy Christmas time:
We’ll plant more yews if possible, albeit
We plant the graveyards with them.
Day and night I worked my rhythmic thought, and furrowed up
Both watch and slumber with long lines of life
Which did not suit their season. The rose fell
From either cheek, my eyes globed luminous
Through orbits of blue shadow, and my pulse
Would shudder along the purple-veined wrist
Like a shot bird. Youth’s stern, set face to face
With youth’s ideal; and when people came
And said, “You work too much, you are looking ill,”
I smiled for pity of them who pitied me,
And thought I should be better soon, perhaps,
For those ill looks. Observe, “I” means in youth
Just I, the conscious and eternal soul
With all its ends, and not the outside life,
The parcel-man, the doublet of the flesh,
The so much liver, lung, integument,
Which make the sum of “I” hereafter, when
World-talkers talk of doing well or ill.
I prosper if I gain a step, although A nail then pierced my foot: although my brain,
Embracing any truth, froze paralyzed,
I prosper: I but change my instrument;
I break the spade off, digging deep for gold,
And catch the mattock up. I worked on, on.
Through all the bristling fence of nights and days
Which hedges time in from the eternities
I struggled, never stopped to note the stakes

Which hurt me in my course. The midnight oil
Would stink sometimes; there came some vulgar needs:
I had to live that therefore I might work,
And, being but poor, I was constrained, for life,
To work with one hand for the book-sellers
While working with the other for myself
And art: you swim with feet, as well as hands,
Or make small way. I apprehended this.
In England no one lives by verse that lives;
And, apprehending, I resolved by prose
To make a space to sphere my living verse.
I wrote for cyclopaedias, magazines,
And weekly papers, holding up my name
To keep it from the mud. I learnt the use
Of the editorial "we" in a review,
As courtly ladies the fine trick of trains,
And swept it grandly through the open doors,
As if one could not pass through doors at all,
Save so encumbered. I wrote tales beside,
Carved many an article on cherry-stones
To suit light readers, — something in the lines
Revealing, it was said, the mallet-hand:
But that I'll never vouch for. What you do
For bread will taste of common grain, not grapes,
Although you have a vineyard in Champagne,
Much less in Nephelococcygia,
As mine was, peradventure.

Having bread
For just so many days, just breathing-room
For body and verse, I stood up straight, and worked
My veritable work. And as the soul
Which grows within a child makes the child grow,

Or as the fiery sap, the touch from God,
Careering through a tree, dilates the bark,
And roughs with scale and knob, before it strikes
The summer-foliage out in a green flame,
So life, in deepening with me, deepened all
The course I took, the work I did.
Indeed,
The academic law convinced of sin:
The critics cried out on the falling off,
Regretting the first manner. But I felt
My heart's life throbbing in my verse to show
It lived, it also — certes incomplete,
Disordered with all Adam in the blood,
But even its very tumors, warts, and wens
Still organized by and implying life.
A lady called upon me on such a day.
She had the low voice of your English dames, —
Unused, it seems, to need rise half a note
To catch attention, — and their quiet mood,
As if they lived too high above the earth
For that to put them out in any thing:
So gentle, because verily so proud;
So wary and afraid of hurting you,
By no means that you are not really vile,
But that they would not touch you with their foot
To push you to your place; so self-possessed,
Yet gracious and conciliating, it takes an effort in their presence to speak truth:
You know the sort of woman, — brilliant stuff,
And out of nature. "Lady Wadmar."
She said her name quite simply, as if it meant
Not much, indeed, but something;
Took my hands, And smiled as if her smile could help my case,
And dropped her eyes on me, and let them melt.
"Is this," she said, "the muse?"

"No sibyl, even,"
I answered, "since she fails to guess
the cause
Which taxed you with this visit,
madam."

"Good,"
She said. "I value what's sincere at
once.
Perhaps, if I had found a literal muse,
The visit might have taxed me. As
it is,
You wear your blue so chiefly in your
eyes,

My fair Aurora, in a frank, good way,
It comforts me entirely for your fame,
As well as for the trouble of ascent
To this Olympus."

There a silver laugh
Ran rippling through her quickened
little breaths
The steep stair somewhat justified.

"But still
Your ladyship has left me curious why
You dared the risk of finding the said
muse?"

"Ah, keep me, notwithstanding, to
the point.
Like any pedant? Is the blue in eyes
As awful as in stockings, after all,
I wonder, that you'd have my busi-
ness out

Before I breathe—exact the epic
plunge
In spite of gasps? Well, naturally
you think

I've come here, as the lion-hunters go
To deserts, to secure you with a trap
For exhibition in my drawing-rooms
On zoölogic soirées? not in the least.
Roar softly at me: I am frivolous,

I dare say; I have played at wild-
beast shows
Like other women of my class,—but
now

I meet my lion simply as Androcles
Met his . . . when at his mercy."

So, she bent
Her head as queens may mock, then,
lifting up
Her eyelids with a real grave queenly
look,
Which ruled, and would not spare,
not even herself,—
"I think you have a cousin,—Rom-
ney Leigh."

"You bring a word from him?" — my
eyes leapt up

To the very height of hers,—"a word
from him?"

"I bring a word about him actually.
But first ^U(she pressed me with her
urgent eyes),

"You do not love him,—you?"
"You're frank at least
In putting questions, madam," I
replied.

"I love my cousin cousinly—no
more."

"I guessed as much. I'm ready to
be frank
In answering also, if you'll question
me,
Or even for something less. You
stand outside,
You arist women, of the common
sex;
You share not with us, and exceed us
so
Perhaps by what you're mulcted in,
your hearts
Being starved to make your heads:

so run the old
Traditions of you. I can therefore
speak
Without the natural shame which
creatures feel,
When speaking on their level, to
their like.

There's many a papist she, would
rather die
Than own to her maid she put a rib-
bon on
To catch the indifferent eye of such a
man,
Who yet would count adulteries on
her beads
At holy Mary's shrine, and never
blush,
Because the saints are so far off we
lose
All modesty before them. Thus to-
day.
"Tis I love Romney Leigh."

"Forbear!" I cried.
"If here's no muse, still less is any
saint,
Nor even a friend, that Lady Walde-
mar
Should make confessions". . .
"That's unkindly said.
If no friend, what forbids to make a
friend
To join to our confession, ere we have
done?

I love your cousin. If it seems unwise
To say so, it's still foolisher (we're frank)
To feel so. My first husband left me young,
And pretty enough, so please you, and rich enough
To keep my booth in May-fair with the rest
To happy issues. There are marquises
Would serve seven years to call me wife, I know,
And after seven I might consider it, For there's some comfort in a marquise,
When all's said, — yes, but after the seven years;
I now love Romney. You put up your lip
So like a Leigh! so like him! Pardon me,
I'm well aware I do not derogate
In loving Romneuy Leigh. The name is good,
The means are excellent; but the man, the man —
Heaven help us both, — I am near as mad as he
In loving such an one."

She slowly swung
Her heavy ringlets till they touched her smile,
As reasonably sorry for herself,
And thus continued: — "Of a truth, Miss Leigh,
I have not without struggle come to this.
I took a master in the German tongue,
I gamed a little, went to Paris twice;
But, after all, this love! . . . you eat of love,
And do as vile a thing as if you ate Of garlic, which, whatever else you eat,
Tastes uniformly acrid, till your peach Reminds you of your onion. Am I coarse?
Well, love's coarse, nature's coarse. Ah, there's the rub!
We fair fine ladies, who park out our lives
From common sheep-paths, cannot help the crows
From flying over: we're as natural still
As Blowsalinda. Drape us perfectly
In Lyons velvet, we are not for that

Lay-figures, look you: we have hearts within, — Warm, live, improvident, indecent hearts, As ready for outrageous ends and acts As any distressed seamstress of them all That Romney groans and toils for. We catch love, And other fevers, in the vulgar way. Love will not be outwitted by our wit, Nor outrun by our equipages: mine Persisted, spite of efforts. All my cards Turned up but Romney Leigh; my German stopped At germane Wertherism; my Paris rounds Returned me from the Champs Ely. sees just A ghost, and sighing like Dido's. I came home Uncured, convicted rather to myself Of being in love . . . in love! That's coarse, you'll say, I'm talking garlic." Coldly I replied: "Apologize for atheism, not love! For me, I do believe in love, and God. I know my cousin; Lady Waldemar I know not: yet I say as much as this, — Whoever loves him, let her not excuse, But cleanse herself, that, loving such a man, She may not do it with such unworthy love He cannot stoop and take it." "That is said Austerely, like a youthful prophetess, Who knits her brows across her pretty eyes To keep them back from following the gray flight Of doves between the temple-columns. Dear, Be kinder with me: let us two be friends. I'm a mere woman, — the more weak, perhaps, Through being so proud; you're better; as for him, He's best. Indeed, he builds his goodness up So high, it topples down to the other side,

And makes a sort of badness: there's
the worst
I have to say against your cousin's
best.
And so be mild, Aurora, with my
worst,
For his sake, if not mine." "I own myself
Incredulous of confidence like this
Availing him or you." "And I, myself,
Of being worthy of him with any love:
In your sense I am not so; let it
pass.
And yet I save him if I marry him;
Let that pass too." "Pass, pass! we play police
Upon my cousin's life to indicate
What may or may not pass?" I cried.
"He knows
What's worthy of him: the choice re-
mains with *him*;
And what he chooses, act or wife, I
think
I shall not call unworthy, I, for one."
"'Tis somewhat rashly said," she an-
swered slow.
"Now let's talk reason, though we
talk of love.
Your cousin Romney Leigh's a mon-
ster: there,
The word's out fairly, let me prove
the fact.
We'll take, say, that most perfect of
antiques
They call the Genius of the Vatican,
(Which seems too beauteous to endure
itself
In this mixed world, and fasten it for
once
Upon the torso of the Dancing Faun,
(Who might limp, surely, if he did not
dance.)
Instead of Buonarroti's mask: what
then?
We show the sort of monster Romney
is,
With godlike virtues and heroic aims
Subjoined to limping possibilities
Of mismade human nature. Grant
the man
Twice godlike, twice heroic, still he
limps;
And here's the point we come to." "Pardon me;
But, Lady Waldemar, the point's the
thing
We never come to."

"Caustic, insolent
At need! I like you," — (there she
took my hands)
"And now, my lioness, help Andro-
cles,
For all your roaring. Help me! for
myself
I would not say so, but for him. He
limps
So certainly, he'll fall into the pit
A week hence, — so I lose him, so he
is lost!
For when he's fairly married, he a
Leigh,
To a girl of doubtful life, undoubtful
birth,
Starved out in London till her coarse-
grained hands
Are whiter than her morals, even
you
May call his choice unworthy."
"Married! lost!
He . . . Romney!"
"Ah, you're moved at last, she said.
"These monsters, set out in the open
sun,
Of course throw monstrous shadows:
those who think
Awry will scarce act straightly. Who
but he?
And who but you can wonder? He
has been mad,
The whole world knows, since first, a
nominal man,
He soured the proctors, tried the
gownsmen's wits
With equal scorn of triangles and
wine,
And took no honors, yet was honora-
ble.
They'll tell you he lost count of Ho-
mer's ships
In Melbourne's poor-bills, Ashley's
factory-bills;
Ignored the Aspasia we all dare to
praise,
For other women, dear, we could not
name
Because we're decent. Well, he had
some right
On his side, probably: men always
have,
Who go absurdly wrong. The living
boor
Who brews your ale exceeds in vital
worth
Dead Caesar who 'stops bungholes' in
the cask.
And also, to do good is excellent,

For persons of his income, even to
boors.
I sympathize with all such things.
But he
Went mad upon them . . . madder
and more mad
From college times to these, as, going
down hill,
The faster still, the farther. You
must know
Your Leigh by heart: he has sown his
black young curls
With bleaching cares of half a million
men
Already. If you do not starve, or
sin,
You're nothing to him: pay the in-
come-tax,
And break your heart upon't, he'll
scarce be touched;
But come upon the parish, qualified
For the parish stocks, and Ronney
will be there
To call you brother, sister, or perhaps
A tenderer name still. Had I any
chance
With Mister Leigh, who am Lady
Waldemar,
And never committed felony?" "You speak
Too bitterly," I said, "for the literal
truth."

 "The truth is bitter. Here's a man
who looks
Forever on the ground. You must be
low,
Or else a pictured ceiling overhead,
Good painting thrown away. For me,
I've done
What women may: we're somewhat
limited,
We modest women; but I've done my
best
— How men are perjured when they
swear our eyes
Have meaning in them! They're just
blue or brown,
They just can drop their lids a little.
And yet
Mine did more; for I read half Fou-
rier through,
Proudhon, Considerant, and Louis
Blanc,
With various others of his socialists,
And, if I had been a fathom less in
love,
Had cured myself with gaping. As
it was,

I quoted from them prettily enough,
Perhaps, to make them sound half
rational
To a saner man than he whene'er we
talked,
(For which I dodged occasion;) learnt
by heart
His speeches in the Commons and
elsewhere
Upon the social question; heaped re-
ports
Of wicked women and penitentia-
ries
On all my tables (with a place for
Sue);
And gave my name to swell subscrip-
tion-lists
Toward keeping up the sun at nights
in heaven,
And other possible ends. All things
I did,
Except the impossible . . . such as
wearing gowns
Provided by the Tea Hours' move-
ment: there
I stopped — we must stop somewhere.
He, meanwhile,
Unmoved as the Indian tortoise 'neath
the world,
Let all that noise go on upon his
back.
He would not disconcert or throw me
out;
'Twas well to see a woman of my
class
With such a dawn of conscience. For
the heart
Made firewood for his sake, and flam-
ing up
To his face, — he merely warmed his
feet at it:
Just designed to let my carriage stop
him short
In park or street, he leaning on the
door
With news of the committee which
sate last
On pickpockets at suck." "You jest, you jest."

 "As martyrs jest, dear (if you read
their lives)
Upon the axe which kills them.
When all's done
By me . . . for him — you'll ask him
presently
The color of my hair: he cannot tell,
Or answers, 'Dark,' at random; while,
be sure,

He's absolute on the figure, five or ten,
Of my last subscription. Is it bearable,
And I a woman?"

"Is it reparable,
Though I were a man?"
"I know not. That's to prove.
But first, this shameful marriage?"

"Ay?" I cried,
"Then really there's a marriage?"

"Yesterday
I held him fast upon it. 'Mister Leigh,'

Said I, 'shut up a thing, it makes more noise.

The boiling town keeps secrets ill:
I've known

Yours since last week. Forgive my knowledge so:

You feel I'm not the woman of the world

The world thinks; you have borne with me before,
And used me in your noble work, our work,

And now you shall not cast me off because

You're at the difficult point, the *join*. 'Tis true

Even I can scarce admit the cogency
Of such a marriage . . . where you do not love,
(Except the class) yet marry, and throw your name

Down to the gutter, for a fire-escape
To future generations! 'tis sublime,
A great example, a true genesis
Of the opening social era. But take heed:

This virtuous act must have a patent weight,

Or loses half its virtue. Make it tell,
Interpret it, and set in the light,
And do not muffle it in a winter-cloak
As a vulgar bit of shame,—as if, at best,

A Leigh had made a misalliance, and blushed

A Howard should know it.' Then I pressed him more:

'He would not choose,' I said, 'that even his kin . . .

Aurora Leigh, even . . . should conceive his act

Less sacrifice, more fantasy.' At which

He grew so pale, dear . . . to the lips, I knew

I had touched him. 'Do you know her,' he inquired,
'My cousin Aurora?' — 'Yes,' I said,
and lied,
(But truly we all know you by your books)

And so I offered to come straight to you,

Explain the subject, justify the cause,
And take you with me to St. Margaret's Court

To see this miracle, this Marian Erle,
This drover's daughter (she's not pretty, he swears),

Upon whose finger, exquisitely pricked
By a hundred needles, we're to hang the tie

'Twixt class and class in England,—thus indeed

By such a presence, yours and mine, to lift

The match up from the doubtful place. At once

He thanked me, sighing, murmured to himself,
'She'll do it, perhaps: she's noble,'—thanked me twice,

And promised, as my guerdon, to put off

His marriage for a month."

I answered then,
"I understand your drift imperfectly.
You wish to lead me to my cousin's betrothed,

To touch her hand if worthy, and hold her hand

If feeble, thus to justify his match.
So be it, then. But how this serves your ends,

And how the strange confession of your love

Serves this, I have to learn—I cannot see."

She knit her restless forehead.

"Then, despite Aurora, that most radiant morning name,

You're dull as any London afternoon.
I wanted time, and gained it; wanted you,

And gain you! You will come and see the girl

In whose most prodigal eyes the lineal pearl

And pride of all your lofty race of Leights

Is destined to solution. Authorized

By sight and knowledge, then, you'll
speak your mind,
And prove to Romney, in your brilliant way,
He'll wrong the people and posterity,
(Say such a thing is bad for me and
you,
And you fail utterly) by concluding
thus

An execrable marriage. Break it up,
Disroot it; peradventure presently
We'll plant a better fortune in its
place.

Be good to me, Aurora, scorn me less
For saying the thing I should not.
Well I know

I should not. I have kept, as others
have,

The iron rule of womanly reserve
In lip and life, till now: I wept a
week

Before I came here." Ending, she
was pale.

The last words, haughtily said, were
tremulous.

This palfrey pranced in harness,
arched her neck,

And only by the foam upon the bit
You saw she champed against it.

Then I rose.
"I love love: truth's no cleaner thing
than love.

I comprehend a love so fiery hot
It burns its natural veil of august
shame,

And stands sublimely in the nude, as
chaste

As Medicene Venus. But I know,
A love that burns through veils will
burn through masks,

And shrivel up treachery. What, love
and lie!

Nay. Go to the opera! Your love's
curable."

I love and lie?" she said, — "I lie,
forsooth?"

and beat her taper foot upon the
floor,

and smiled against the shoe,—
"You're hard, Miss Leigh,

versed in current phrases. Bowling-greens

poets are fresher than the world's
highways.

Give me that I rashly blew the
dust

which diems our hedges even, in your
eyes,

And vexed you so much. You find,
probably,

No evil in this marriage, rather good
Of innocence, to pastoralize in song.

You'll give the bond your signature,
perhaps,

Beneath the lady's mark, indifferent
That Romney chose a wife could
write her name,

In witnessing he loved her."
"Loved!" I cried.

"Who tells you that he wants a wife
to love?

He gets a horse to use, not love, I
think:

There's work for wives, as well,—
and after, straw,

When men are liberal. For myself,
you err

Supposing power in me to break this
match.

I could not do it to save Romney's
life,

And would not to save mine."

"You take it so,"
She said: "farewell, then. Write
your books in peace,

As far as may be for some secret stir
Now obvious to me; for, most obvi-

ously,

In coming hither I mistook the way."

Whereat she touched my hand, and
bent her head,

And floated from me like a silent
cloud

That leaves the sense of thunder.

I drew breath,
Oppressed in my deliverance. After
all,

This woman breaks her social system
up

For love, so counted, — the love possi-

ble

To such; and lilies are still lilies,
pulled

By smutty hands, though spotted
from their white;

And thus she is better haply, of her
kind,

Than Romney Leigh, who lives by
diagrams,

And crosses out the spontaneities
Of all his individual, personal life

With formal universals. As if man
Were set upon a high stool at a desk

To keep God's books for him in red
and black,

And feel by millions! What if even
God

Were chiefly God by living out himself
To an individualism of the infinite,
Eterne, intense, profuse,— still
throwing up
The golden spray of multitudinous
worlds
In measure to the proclive weight
and rush
Of his inner nature,— the spontaneous
love
Still proof and outflow of spontaneous
life?
Then live, Aurora.

Two hours afterward,
Within St. Margaret's Court I stood
alone,
Close-veiled. A sick child, from an
ague-fit,
Whose wasted right hand gambolled
against his left
With an old brass button in a blot of
sun,
Jeered weakly at me as I passed
across
The uneven pavement; while a woman rouged
Upon the angular cheek-bones, kerchief torn,
Thin dangling locks, and flat lascivious mouth,
Cursed at a window both ways, in
and out,
By turns some bed-rid creature and
myself,—
“Lie still there, mother! liker the
dead dog
You'll be to-morrow. What, we pick
our way,
Fine madam, with those damnable
small feet!
We cover up our face from doing good,
As if it were our purse! What
brings you here,
My lady? is't to find my gentleman
Who visits his tame pigeon in the
eaves?
Our cholera catch you with its cramps
and spasms,
And tumble up your good clothes,
veil and all,
And turn your whiteness dead-blue!”
I looked up:
I think I could have walked through
hell that day,
And never flinched. “The dear
Christ comfort you,”
I said, “you must have been most
miserable,

To be so cruel;” and I emptied out
My purse upon the stones: when, as
I had cast
The last charm in the caldron, the
whole court
Went boiling, bubbling up, from all
its doors
And windows, with a hideous wail of
laughs,
And roar of oaths, and blows per-
haps . . . I passed
Too quickly for distinguishing . . .
and pushed
A little side-door hanging on a hinge,
And plunged into the dark, and
groped and climbed
The long, steep, narrow stair 'twixt
broken rail
And mildewed wall that let the plas-
ter drop
To startle me in the blackness. Still,
up, up!
So high lived Romney's bride. I
paused at last
Before a low door in the roof, and
knocked:
There came an answer like a hurried
dove,—
“So soon? can that be Mister Leigh?
so soon?
And as I entered an ineffable face
Met mine upon the threshold. “Oh,
not you,
Not you!” The dropping of the
voice implied,
“Then, if not you, for me not any
one.”
I looked her in the eyes, and held
her hands,
And said, “I am his cousin,— Rom-
ney Leigh's;
And here I come to see my cousin
too.”
She touched me with her face and
with her voice,
This daughter of the people. Such
soft flowers,
From such rough roots? the people
under there,
Can sin so, curse so, look so, smell so
. . . laugh!
Yet have such daughters?
Nowise beautiful
Was Marian Erle. She was not white
nor brown,
But could look either, like a mist
that changed
According to being shone on more or
less.

The hair, too, ran its opulence of
curls
In doubt 'twixt dark and bright, nor
left you clear
To name the color. Too much hair,
perhaps,
(I'll name a fault here) for so small a
head,
Which seemed to droop on that side
and on this,
As a full-blown rose uneasy with its
weight,
Though not a wind should trouble it.
Again,
The dimple in the cheek had better
gone
With redder, fuller rounds; and
somewhat large
The mouth was, though the milky
little teeth
Dissolved it so infantine a smile.
For soon it smiled at me; the eyes
smiled too,
But 'twas as if remembering they had
wept,
And knowing they should some day
weep again.

We talked. She told me all her
story out,
Which I'll retell with fuller utter-
ance,
As colored and confirmed in after-
times
By others and herself too. Marian
Erle
Was born upon the ledge of Malvern
Hill,
To eastward, in a hut built up at
night,
To evade the landlord's eye, of mud
and turf;
still liable, if once he looked that
way,
To being straight levelled, scattered
by his foot,
Like any other anthill. Born, I say.
God sent her to his world commis-
sioned right,
Her human testimonials fully signed;
not scant in soul, complete in linea-
ments:
at others had to swindle her a place
to wail in when she had come. No
place for her,
By man's law! Born an outlaw was
this babe:
her first cry in our strange and stran-
gling air,

When cast in spasms out by the shud-
dering womb,
Was wrong against the social code,—
forced wrong:
What business had the baby to cry
there?
I tell her story and grow passionate.
She, Marian, did not tell it so, but
used
Meek words that made no wonder of
herself
For being so a sad creature. "Mister
Leigh
Considered truly that such things
should change.
They will, in heaven—but meantime,
on the earth,
There's none can like a nettle as a
pink,
Except himself. We're nettles, some
of us,
And give offence by the act of spring-
ing up;
And, if we leave the damp side of the
wall,
The hoes, of course, are on us." So
she said.
Her father earned his life by random
jobs
Despised by steadier workmen,—
keeping swine
On commons, picking hops, or hurry-
ing on
The harvest at wet seasons, or, at
need,
Assisting the Welsh drovers, when a
drove
Of startled horses plunged into the
mist
Below the mountain-road, and sowed
the wind
With wandering neighings. In be-
tween the gaps
Of such irregular work he drank and
slept,
And cursed his wife because, the pence
being out,
She could not buy more drink. At
which she turned,
(The worm) and beat her baby in re-
venge
For her own broken heart. There's
not a crime
But takes its proper change out still in
crime
If once rung on the counter of this
world:
Let sinners look to it.

Yet the outcast child,
For whom the very mother's face fore-
went
The mother's special patience, lived
and grew;
Learnt early to cry low, and walk
alone,
With that pathetic, vacillating roll
Of the infant body on the uncertain
feet,
(The earth being felt unstable ground
so soon,) At which most women's arms unclose
at once
With irrepressive instinct. Thus at
three.
This poor weaned kid would run off
from the fold,
This babe would steal off from the
mother's chair,
And, creeping through the golden
walls of gorse,
Would find some keyhole toward the
secrecy
Of heaven's high blue, and, nestling
down, peer out —
Oh, not to catch the angels at their
games,
She had never heard of angels, — but
to gaze
She knew not why, to see she knew
not what,
A-hungering outward from the barren
earth
For something like a joy. She liked,
she said.
To dazzle black her sight against the
sky;
For then, it seemed, some grand blind
Love came down,
And groped her out, and clasped her
with a kiss.
She learnt God that way, and was
beat for it
Whenever she went home, yet came
again,
As surely as the trapped hare, get-
ting free,
Returns to his form. This grand
blind Love, she said,
This skyey father and mother both in
one,
Instructed her and civilized her
more
Than even Sunday school did after-
ward,
To which a lady sent her to learn
books,
And sit upon a long bench in a row

With other children. Well, she
laughed sometimes
To see them laugh and laugh, and
maul their texts;
But ofter she was sorrowful with
noise,
And wondered if their mothers beat
them hard
That ever they should laugh so.
There was one
She loved indeed, — Rose Bell, a seven
years' child
So pretty and clever, who read syllab-
bies
When Marian was at letters: she
would laugh
At nothing, hold your finger up, she
laughed,
Then shook her curls down over eyes
and mouth
To hide her make-mirth from the
schoolmaster.
And Rose's pelting glee, as frank as
rain
On cherry-blossoms, brightened Mar-
ian too,
To see another merry whom she loved.
She whispered once (the children side
by side,
With mutual arms intwined about
their necks)
"Your mother lets you laugh so?"
"Ay," said Rose,
"She lets me. She was dug into the
ground
Six years since, I being but a yearling
wean.
Such mothers let us play, and lose our
time,
And never scold nor beat us. Don't
you wish
You had one like that?" There
Marian breaking off
Looked suddenly in my face. "Poor
Rose!" said she:
"I heard her laugh last night in Ox-
ford Street.
I'd pour out half my blood to stop
that laugh.
Poor Rose, poor Rose!" said Marian.
She resumed.
It tried her, when she had learnt at
Sunday school
What God was, what he wanted from
us all,
And how in choosing sin we vexed
the Christ,
To go straight home, and hear her
father pull

The Name down on us from the thunder-shelf,
Then drink away his soul into the dark
From seeing judgment. Father, mother, home,
Were God and heaven reversed to her: the more
She knew of right, the more she guessed their wrong:
Her price paid down for knowledge was to know
The vileness of her kindred: through her heart,
Her filial and tormented heart, henceforth,
They struck their blows at virtue.
Oh! 'tis hard
To learn you have a father up in heaven
By a gathering certain sense of being, on earth,
Still worse than orphaned: 'tis too heavy a grief
The having to thank God for such a joy.

And so passed Marian's life from year to year.
Her parents took her with them when they tramped,
Dodged lanes and heaths, frequented towns and fairs,
And once went farther, and saw Manchester,
And once the sea, — that blue end of the world,
That fair scroll-finis of a wicked book, —
And twice a prison, back at intervals,
Returning to the hills. Hills draw like heaven.
And stronger sometimes, holding out their hands
To pull you from the vile flats up to them.
And though, perhaps, these strollers still strolled back,
As sheep do, simply that they knew the way,
They certainly felt bettered unaware,
Emerging from the social smut of towns,
To wipe their feet clean on the mountain turf.
In which long wanderings Marian lived and learned,

Endured and learned. The people on the roads
Would stop, and ask her why her eyes outgrew
Her cheeks, and if she meant to lodge the birds
In all that hair; and then they lifted her, —
The miller in his cart a mile or twain, The butcher's boy on horseback. Often, too,
The peddler stopped, and tapped her on the head
With absolute forefinger, brown and ringed,
And asked, if peradventure she could read;
And when she answered, "Ay," would toss her down
Some stray odd volume from his heavy pack, —
A "Thomson's Seasons," mulcted of the spring,
Or half a play of Shakspeare's, torn across,
(She had to guess the bottom of a page
By just the top, sometimes; as difficult
As, sitting on the moon, to guess the earth!)
Or else a sheaf of leaves (for that small Ituth's
Small gleanings) torn out from the heart of books,
From Churchyard Elegies and Edens Lost,
From Burns, and Bunyan, Selkirk, and Tom Jones.
'Twas somewhat hard to keep the things distinct;
And oft the jangling influence jarred the child,
Like looking at a sunset full of grace
Through a pothouse window, while the drunken oaths
Went on behind her. But she weeded out
Her book-leaves, threw away the leaves that hurt,
(First tore them small, that none should find a word)
And made a nosegay of the sweet and good
To fold within her breast, and pore upon
At broken moments of the noon tide glare,
When leave was given her to untie her cloak,

And rest upon the dusty highway's bank
 From the road's dust: or oft, the journey done,
 Some city friend would lead her by the hand
 To hear a lecture at an institute.
 And thus she had grown, this Marian Erie of ours,
 To no book-learning. She was ignorant
 Of authors; not in earshot of the things
 Outspoken o'er the heads of common men
 Bymen who are uncommon, but within
 The cadenced hum of such, and capable
 Of catching from the fringes of the wing
 Some fragmentary phrases here and there
 Of that fine music, which, being carried in
 To her soul, had reproduced itself afresh
 In finer motions of the lips and lids.
 She said, in speaking of it, "If a flower
 Were thrown you out of heaven at intervals,
 You'd soon attain to a trick of looking up."
 And so with her. She counted me her years,
 Till I felt old; and then she counted me
 Her sorrowful pleasures, till I felt ashamed.
 She told me she was fortunate and calm
 On such and such a season, sate and sewed,
 With no one to break up her crystal thoughts,
 While rhymes from lovely poems span around
 Their ringing circles of ecstatic tune,
 Beneath the moistened finger of the hour.
 Her parents called her a strange, sickly child,
 Not good for much, and given to sulk and stare,
 And smile into the hedges and the clouds,
 And tremble if one shook her from her fit
 By any blow, or word even. Outdoor
 jobs
 Went ill with her, and household quiet work
 She was not born to. Had they kept
 the north,
 They might have had their penny-worth out of her,
 Like other parents, in the factories,
 (Your children work for you, not you
 for them,
 Or else they better had been choked with air
 The first breath drawn;) but, in this tramping life,
 Was nothing to be done with such a child
 But tramp and tramp. And yet she knitted hose
 Not ill, and was not dull at needle-work;
 And all the country people gave her pence
 For darning stockings past their natural age,
 And patching petticoats from old to new,
 And other light work done for thrifty wives.
 One day, said Marian,—the sun shone that day,—
 Her mother had been badly beat, and felt
 The bruises sore about her wretched soul,
 (That must have been): she came in suddenly,
 And snatching in a sort of breathless rage
 Her daughter's headgear comb, let down the hair
 Upon her like a sudden waterfall,
 Then drew her drenched and passive by the arm
 Outside the hut they lived in. When the child
 Could clear her blinded face from all that stream
 Of tresses . . . there a man stood, with beast's eyes,
 That seemed as they would swallow her alive,
 Complete in body and spirit, hair and all,
 And burning stertorous breath that hurt her cheek,
 He breathed so near. The mother held her tight,

Saying hard between her teeth, "Why,
wench, why, wench,
The squire speaks to you now! the
squire's too good:
He means to set you up, and comfort
us.
Be mannerly at least." The child
turned round
And looked up piteous in the mother's
face,
(Be sure that mother's death-bed will
not want
Another devil to damn, than such a
look)
"O mother!" Then, with desperate
glance to heaven,
"God, free me from my mother!"
she shrieked out,
These mothers are too dreadful."
And, with force
As passionate as fear, she tore her
hands,
Like lilies from the rocks, from hers
and his,
And sprang down, bounded headlong
down the steep,
Away from both — away, if possible,
As far as God, — away! They yelled
at her,
As famished hounds at a hare. She
heard them yell;
She felt her name hiss after her from
the hills,
Like shot from guns. On, on. And
now she had cast
The voices off with the uplands. On.
Mad fear
Was running in her feet, and killing
the ground;
The white roads curled as if she
burnt them up;
The green fields melted; wayside
trees fell back
To make room for her. Then her
head grew vexed;
Trees, fields, turned on her and ran
after her;
She heard the quick pants of the hills
behind,
Their keen air pricked her neck: she
had lost her feet,
Could run no more, yet somehow
went as fast,
The horizon red 'twixt steeples in the
east
So sucked her forward, forward,
while her heart
Kept swelling, swelling, till it swelled
so big

It seemed to fill her body, when it
burst,
And overflowed the world, and
swamped the light:
"And now I am dead and safe,"
thought Marian Erle.
She had dropped, she had fainted.
As the sense returned,
The night had passed, — not life's
night. She was 'ware
Of heavy tumbling motions, creaking
wheels,
The driver shouting to the lazy team
That swung their rankling bells
against her brain,
While through the wagon's cover-
ture and chinks
The cruel yellow morning pecked at
her,
Alive or dead upon the straw inside;
At which her soul ached back into
the dark
And prayed, "No more of that." A
wagoner
Had found her in a ditch beneath the
moon,
As white as moonshine, save for the
oozing blood.
At first he thought her dead; but
when he had wiped
The mouth, and heard it sigh, he
raised her up,
And laid her in his wagon in the
straw,
And so conveyed her to the distant
town
To which his business called himself,
and left
That heap of misery at the hospital.
She stirred: the place seemed new
and strange as death.
The white strait bed, with others
strait and white,
Like graves dug side by side at meas-
ured lengths,
And quiet people walking in and out
With wonderful low voices and soft
steps,
And apparitional equal care for each,
Astonished her with order, silence,
law;
And when a gentle hand held out a
cup,
She took it, as you do at sacrament,
Half awed, half melted, not being
used, indeed,
To so much love as makes the form
of love

And courtesy of manners. Delicate
drinks,
And rare white bread, to which some
dying eyes
Were turned in observation. O my
God,
How sick we must be ere we make
men just!
I think it frets the saints in heaven
to see
How many desolate creatures on the
earth
Have learnt the simple dues of fel-
lowship
And social comfort, in a hospital,
As Marian did. She lay there,
stunned, half tranced,
And wished, at intervals of growing
sense,
She might be sicker yet, if sickness
made
The world so marvellous kind, the
air so hushed,
And all her wake-time quiet as a
sleep;
For now she understood (as such
things were)
How sickness ended very oft in heav-
en
Among the unspoken raptures—yet
more sick,
And surerly happy. Then she
dropped her lids,
And, folding up her hands as flowers
at night,
Would lose no moment of the blessed
time.

She lay and seethed in fever many
weeks.
But youth was strong, and overcame
the test:
Revolted soul and flesh were recon-
ciled,
And fetched back to the necessary
day
And daylight duties. She could creep
about
The long bare rooms, and stare out
drearily
From any narrow window on the
street,
Till some one who had nursed her as
a friend
Said coldly to her, as an enemy,
“She had leave to go next week,
being well enough,”
(While only her heart ached.) “Go
next week,” thought she,

“Next week! how would it be with
her next week,
Let out into that terrible street alone
Among the pushing people . . . to go
. . . where?”

One day, the last before the dreaded
last,
Among the convalescents, like herself
Prepared to go next morning, she
sat dumb,
And heard half absently the women
talk,—
How one was famished for her baby’s
cheeks,
“The little wretch would know her!
a year old
And lively, like his father;” one was
keen
To get to work, and fill some clamor-
ous mouths;
And one was tender for her dear
goodman
Who had missed her sorely; and one,
querulous . . .
“Would pay backbiting neighbors
who had dared
To talk about her as already dead;”
And one was proud . . . “and if her
sweetheart Luke
Had left her for a ruddier face than
hers,
(The gossip would be seen through at
a glance)
Sweet riddance of such sweethearts
—let him hang!
‘Twere good to have been sick for
such an end.”

And while they talked, and Marian
felt the worse
For having missed the worst of all
their wrongs,
A visitor was ushered through the
wards
And paused among the talkers.
“When he looked
It was as if he spoke, and when he
spoke
He sang perhaps,” said Marian;
“could she tell?
She only knew” (so much she had
chronicled),
As seraphs might the making of the
sun)
“That he who came and spake was
Romney Leigh,
And then and there she saw and heard
him first.”

And when it was her turn to have the face
Upon her, all those buzzing pallid lips
Being satisfied with comfort—when he changed
To Marian, saying, “And *you*? you’re going, where?”
She, moveless as a worm beneath a stone
Which some one’s stumbling foot has spurned aside,
Writhed suddenly, astonished with the light,
And breaking into sobs cried, “Where I go?
None asked me till this moment.
Can I say
Where *I* go, when it has not seemed worth while
To God himself, who thinks of every one,
To think of me, and fix where I shall go?”
 “So young,” he gently asked her,
“you have lost
Your father and your mother?”
“Both,” she said,
“Both lost! My father was burnt up
With gin
Or ever I sucked milk, and so is lost.
My mother sold me to a man last month,
And so my mother’s lost, ‘tis manifest.
And I, who fled from her for miles and miles,
As if I had caught sight of the fire of hell
Through some wild gap, (she was my mother, sir)
It seems I shall be lost too presently:
And so we end, all three of us.”
 “Poor child!” he said, with such a pity in his voice,
Soothed her more than her own tears,—“poor child!
Tis simple that betrayal by mother’s love
Should bring despair of God’s too.
Yet be taught,
He’s better to us than many mothers are,
And children cannot wander beyond reach
If the sweep of his white raiment.
Touch and hold!

And, if you weep still, weep where John was laid
While Jesus loved him.”
“She could say the words,”
She told me, “exactly as he uttered them
A year back, since in any doubt or dark
They came out like the stars, and shone on her
With just their comfort. Common words, perhaps
The ministers in church might say the same;
But he, he made the church with what he spoke:
The difference was the miracle,” said she.
 Then catching up her smile to ravishment,
She added quickly, “I repeat his words,
But not his tones: can any one repeat
The music of an organ out of church?
And when he said, ‘Poor child!’ I shut my eyes
To feel how tenderly his voice broke through,
As the ointment-box broke on the Holy feet
To let out the rich medicative nard.”
 She told me how he had raised and rescued her
With reverent pity, as in touching grief
He touched the wounds of Christ, and made her feel
More self-respecting. Hope he called belief
In God, work, worship: therefore let us pray.
And thus, to snatch her soul from atheism,
And keep it stainless from her mother’s face,
He sent her to a famous seamstress-house
Far off in London, there to work and hope.
 With that they parted. She kept sight of heaven,
But not of Romney. He had good to do
To others. Through the days and through the nights

She sewed and sewed and sewed.
She drooped sometimes,
And wondered, while along the tawny
light
She struck the new thread into her
needle's eye,
How people without mothers on the
hills
Could choose the town to live in; then
she drew
The stitch, and mused how Romney's
face would look,
And if 'twere likely he'd remember
hers
When they two had their meeting
after death.

BOOK FOURTH.

THEY met still sooner. 'Twas a year
from thence
That Lucy Gresham—the sick seam-
stress girl,
Who sewed by Marian's chair so still
and quick,
And leant her head upon its back to
cough
More freely, when, the mistress turn-
ing round,
The others took occasion to laugh out—
Gave up at last. Among the workers
spoke
A bold girl with black eyebrows and
red lips:
" You know the news? Who's dying,
do you think ?"
Our Lucy Gresham. I expected it
As little as Nell Hart's wedding.—
Blush not, Nell,
Thy curls be red enough without thy
cheeks,
And some day there'll be found a
man to dote
On red curls. Lucy Gresham swooned
last night,
Dropped sudden in the street while
going home;
And now the baker says, who took
her up
And laid her by her grandmother in
bed,
He'll give her a week to die in. Pass
the silk.
Let's hope he gave her a loaf too,
within reach;

For otherwise they'll starve before
they die,
That funny pair of bedfellows! — Miss
Bell,
I'll thank you for the scissors. The
old crone
Is paralytic; that's the reason why
Our Lucy's thread went faster than
her breath,
Which went too quick, we all know.
— Marian Erle!
Why, Marian Erle, you're not the fool
to cry?
Your tears spoil Lady Waldemar's
new dress,
You piece of pity!"
Marian rose up straight,
And, breaking through the talk and
through the work,
Went outward, in the face of their
surprise,
To Lucy's home, to nurse her back to
life
Or down to death. She knew, by
such an act,
All place and grace were forfeit in
the house,
Whose mistress would supply the
missing hand
With necessary not inhuman haste,
And take no blame. But pity, too,
had dues.
She could not leave a solitary soul
To founder in the dark, while she sate
still
And lavished stitches on a lady's
hem,
As if no other work were paramount.
" Why, God," thought Marian, " has
a missing hand
This moment: Lucy wants a drink,
perhaps.
Let others miss me! never miss me,
God!"

So Marian sate by Lucy's bed, con-
tent
With duty and was strong, for recom-
pense,
To hold the lamp of human love arm-
high,
To catch the death-strained eyes, and
comfort them,
Until the angels, on the luminous
side
Of death, had got theirs ready. And
she said,
If Lucy thanked her sometimes, called
her kind,

It touched her strangely. "Marian Erle, called kind !
What Marian, beaten and sold, who could not die !
'Tis verily good fortune to be kind. Ah, you !" she said, " who are born to such a grace, Be sorry for the unlicensed class, the poor, Reduced to think the best good fortune means That others simply should be kind to them."

From sleep to sleep when Lucy had slid away So gently, like the light upon a hill, Of which none names the moment that it goes Though all see when 'tis gone, a man came in And stood beside the bed. The old idiot wretch Screamed feebly, like a baby over-lain, "Sir, sir, you won't mistake me for the corpse ? Don't look at me, sir ! never bury me ! Although I lie here, I'm alive as you, Except my legs and arms,—I eat and drink And understand,—(that you're the gentleman Who fits the funerals up, Heaven speed you, sir.) And certainly I should be livelier still If Lucy here . . . sir, Lucy is the corpse . . . Had worked more properly to buy me wine; But Lucy, sir, was always slow at work, Isha'n't lose much by Lucy.—Marian Erle, Speak up, and show the gentleman the corpse."

And then a voice said, "Marian Erle." She rose; It was the hour for angels—there stood hers ! She scarcely marvelled to see Romney Leigh. As light November snows to empty nests, As grass to graves, as moss to mil-dewed stones,

As July suns to ruins, through the rents, As ministering spirits to mourners, through a loss, As Heaven itself to men, through pangs of death, He came uncalled wherever grief had come. "And so," said Marian Erle, "we met anew," And added softly, "so, we shall not part."

He was not angry that she had left the house Wherein he placed her. Well, she had feared it might Havo vexed him. Also, when he found her set On keeping, though the dead was out of sight, That half-dead, half-live body left behind With cankerous heart and flesh, which took your best, And cursed you for the little good it did, (Could any leave the bedrid wretch alone, So joyless she was thankless even to God, Much more to you ?) he did not say 'twas well, Yet Marian thought he did not take it ill, Since day by day he came, and every day She felt within his utterance and his eyes A closer, tenderer presence of the soul, Until at last he said, "We shall not part."

On that same day was Marian's work complete: She had smoothed the empty bed, and swept the floor Of coffin sawdust, set the chairs anew The dead had ended gossip in, and stood In that poor room so cold and orderly, The door-key in her hand, prepared to go As they had, howbeit not their way. He spoke.

"Dear Marian, of one clay God made us all;

And though men push and poke and paddle in't,
(As children play at fashioning dirt-pies)
And call their fancies by the name of facts,
Assuming difference, lordship, privilege,
When all's plain dirt, they come back to it at last;
The first grave-digger proves it with a spade,
And pats all even. Need we wait for this,
You Marian, and I Romney?"

She, at that,
Looked blindly in his face, as when one looks
Through driving autumn-rains to find the sky.

He went on speaking:

"Marian, I being born
What men call noble, and you issued from
The noble people, though the tyrannous sword
Which pierc'd Christ's heart has cleft the world in twain
'Twixt class and class, opposing rich to poor,
Shall we keep parted? Not so. Let us lean
And strain together rather, each to each,
Compress the red lips of this gaping wound
As far as two souls can, ay, lean and league,—
I from my superabundance, from your want
You,—joining in a protest 'gainst the wrong
On both sides."

All the rest he held her hand
In speaking, which confused the sense of much.
Her heart against his words beat out so thick,
They might as well be written on the dust
Where some poor bird, escaping from hawk's beak,
Has dropped, and beats its shuddering wings, the lines
Are rubbed so; yet 'twas something like to this:
"That they two, standing at the two extremes
Of social classes, had received one seal,

Been dedicate and drawn beyond themselves
To mercy and ministration,—he, indeed,
Through what he knew, and she, through what she felt;
He, by man's conscience, she, by woman's heart,
Relinquishing their several 'vantage posts
Of wealthy ease and honorable toil,
To work with God at love. And since God willed,
That, putting out his hand to touch this ark,
He found a woman's hand there, he'd accept
The sign too, hold the tender fingers fast,
And say, 'My fellow-worker, be my wife!'"

She told the tale with simple, rustic turns,
Strong leaps of meaning in her sudden eyes
That took the gaps of any imperfect phrase
Of the unschooled speaker: I have rather writ
The thing I understood so than the thing
I heard so. And I cannot render right
Her quick gesticulation, wild yet soft,
Self-startled from the habitual mood she used,
Half sad, half languid,—like dumb creatures (now
A rustling bird, and now a wandering deer,
Or squirrel 'gainst the oak-gloom) flashing up
His sidelong, burnished head, in just her way
Of savage spontaneity,) that stir
Abruptly the green silence of the woods,
And make it stranger, holier, more profound;
As Nature's general heart confessed itself
Of life, and then fell backward on repose.
I kissed the lips that ended. "So, indeed,
He loves you, Marian?"

"Loves me!" She looked up
With a child's wonder when you ask
him first
Who made the sun,—a puzzled blush,
that grew,
Then broke off in a rapid, radiant
smile
Of sure solution. "Loves me! He
loves all,
And me, of course. He had not
asked me else
To work with him forever, and be his
wife."

Her words reproved me. This, per-
haps, was love,—
To have its hands too full of gifts to
give,
For putting out a hand to take a gift;
To love so much, the perfect round of
love
includes in strict conclusion being
loved;
As Eden-dew went up, and fell again,
Enough for watering Eden. Obviously
he had not thought about his love at
all.
The cataracts of her soul had poured
themselves,
And risen self-crowned in rainbow:
would she ask
Who crowned her? It sufficed that
she was crowned.
With women of my class 'tis other-
wise:
We haggle for the small change of
our gold,
And so much love accord for so much
love,
Baito-prices. Are we therefore
wrong?
If marriage be a contract, look to it
then,
Contracting parties should be equal,
just;
But if, a simple fealty on one side,
mere religion, right to give, is
all,
And certain brides of Europe duly
ask
To mount the pile as Indian widows
do,
The spices of their tender youth
heaped up,
The jewels of their gracious virtues
worn,
Rare gems, more glory, to consume
entire

For a living husband: as the man's
alive,
Not dead, the woman's duty by so
much
Advanced in England beyond Hindo-
stan.

I sat there musing, till she touched
my hand
With hers, as softly as a strange white
bird
She feared to startle in touching.
"You are kind.
But are you, peradventure, vexed at

heart
Because your cousin takes me for a
wife?

I know I am not worthy—nay, in
truth,
I'm glad on't, since, for that, he
chooses me.

He likes the poor things of the world
the best;

I would not, therefore, if I could, be
rich.

It pleases him to stoop for butter-
cups.

I would not be a rose upon the wall
A queen might stop at, near the pal-
ace-door,

To say to a courtier, 'Pluck that rose
for me;

It's prettier than the rest.' O Rom-
ney Leigh!

I'd rather far be trodden by his foot
Than lie in a great queen's bosom."

Out of breath,

She paused.
"Sweet Marian, do you disavow
The roses with that face?"

She dropt her head
As if the wind had caught that flower
of her

And bent it in the garden, then
looked up

With grave assurance. "Well, you
think me bold;

But so we all are, when we're pray-
ing God.

And if I'm bold, yet, lady, credit me,
That since I know myself for what I
am,—

Much fitter for his handmaid than his
wife,—

I'll prove the handmaid and the wife
at once,

Serve tenderly, and love obediently,
And be a worthier mate, perhaps,
than some

Who are wooed in silk among their learned books;
 While I shall set myself to read his eyes,
 Till such grow plainer to me than the French
 To wisest ladies. Do you think I'll miss
 A letter in the spelling of his mind? No more than they do when they sit and write
 Their flying words with flickering wild-fowl tails,
 Nor ever pause to find how many ts,
 Should that be *y* or *i*, they know't so well:
 I've seen them writing, when I brought a dress
 And waited, floating out their soft white hands
 On shining paper. But they're hard sometimes,
 For all those hands. We've used out many nights,
 And worn the yellow daylight into shreds
 Which flapped and shivered down our aching eyes
 Till night appeared more tolerable, just
 That pretty ladies might look beautiful,
 Who said at last . . . 'You're lazy in that house!
 You're slow in sending home the work: I count
 I've waited near an hour for't.' Pardon me,
 I do not blame them, madam, nor misprise:
 They are fair and gracious; ay, but not like you,
 Since none but you has Mister Leigh's own blood,
 Both noble and gentle,—and without it . . . well,
 They are fair, I said; so fair, it scarce seems strange
 That, flashing out in any looking-glass
 The wonder of their glorious brows and breasts,
 They're charmed so, they forget to look behind,
 And mark how pale we've grown, we pitiful
 Remainders of the world. And so perhaps

If Mister Leigh had chosen a wife from these, She might, although he's better than her best, And dearly she would know it, steal a thought Which should be all his, an eye-glance from his face, To plunge into the mirror opposite In search of her own beauty's pearl; while I . . . Ah, dearest lady, serge will outweigh silk For winter-wear, when bodies feel a-cold, And I'll be a true wife to your cousin Leigh."

Before I answered, he was there himself. I think he had been standing in the room, And listened probably to half her talk, Arrested, turned to stone,—as white as stone. Will tender sayings make men look so white?
 He loves her then profoundly. "You are here, Aurora? Here I meet you!" We clasped hands.

"Even so, dear Romney. Lady Waldemar Has sent me in haste to find a cousin of mine Who shall be?" "Lady Waldemar is good."

"Here's one, at least, who is good," I sighed, and touched Poor Marian's happy head, as dog-like she, Most passionately patient, waited on, A-tremble for her turn of greeting words;

"I've sate a full hour with your Marian Erle, And learnt the thing by heart, and from my heart Am therefore competent to give you thanks For such a cousin." "You accept at last A gift from me, Aurora, without scorn?" At last I please you?" How his voice was changed!

" You cannot please a woman against her will,
And once you vexed me. Shall we speak of that?
We'll say, then, you were noble in it all,
And I not ignorant — let it pass !
And now
You please me, Romney, when you please yourself:
So, please you, be fanatical in love,
And I'm well pleased. Ah, cousin ! at the old hall,
Among the gallery portraits of our Leighs,
We shall not find a sweeter signory
Than this pure forehead's."

Not a word he said.
How arrogant men are! Even philanthropists —
Who try to take a wife up in the way
They put down a subscription-check, if once
She turns, and says, "I will not tax you so,
Most charitable sir" — feel ill at ease,
As though she had wronged them somehow. I suppose
We women should remember what we are,
And not throw back an obolus inscribed
With Caesar's image lightly. I resumed.

" It strikes me, some of those sublime Vandykes
Were not too proud to make good saints in heaven;
And, if so, then they're not too proud to-day,
To bow down (now the ruffs are off their necks)
And own this good, true, noble Marian, yours,
And mine I'll say! For poets (bear the word),
Half-poets even, are still whole democrats, —
Oh, not that we're disloyal to the high,
But loyal to the low, and cognizant
Of the less scrutable majesties. For me,
I comprehend your choice, I justify
Your right in choosing."

" No, no, no!" he sighed,
With a sort of melancholy impatient scorn,

As some grown man who never had a child
Puts by some child who plays at being a man,
" You did not, do not, can not comprehend
My choice, my ends, my motives, nor myself:
No matter now — we'll let it pass, you say.
I thank you for your generous cousinship
Which helps this present: I accept for her
Your favorable thoughts. We're fallen on days,
We two who are not poets, when wed
Requires less mutual love than common love
For two together to bear out at once
Upon the loveless many. Work in pairs,
In galley-couplings or in marriage-rings,
The difference lies in the honor, not the work, —
And such we're bound to, I and she.
But love,
(You poets are benighted in this age,
The hour's too late for catching even moths,
You've gnats instead,) love! — love's fool-paradise
Is out of date, like Adam's. Set a swan
To swim the Trenton rather than true love
To float its fabulous plumage safely down
The cataracts of this loud transition-time,
Whose roar forever henceforth in my ears
Must keep me deaf to music."

There, I turned
And kissed poor Marian, out of discontent.
The man had baffled, chafed me, till I flung
For refuge to the woman, as sometimes,
Impatient of some crowded room's close smell,
You throw a window open, and lean out
To breathe a long breath in the dewy night,

And cool your angry forehead. She,
at least,
Was not built up as walls are, brick
by brick,
Each fancy squared, each feeling
ranged by line,
The very heat of burning youth ap-
plied

To indurate form and system! excel-
lent bricks,
A well-built wall, which stops you
on the road,
And into which you cannot see an
inch
Although you beat your head against
it—pshaw!

"Adien," I said, "for this time, coun-
sins both,
And cousin Romney, pardon me the
word,
Be happy,—oh! in some esoteric
sense
Of course,—I mean no harm in wish-
ing well.
Adieu, my Marian. May she come
to me,
Dear Romney, and be married from
my house?
It is not part of your philosophy
To keep your bird upon the black-
thorn?"

"Ay,
He answered; "but it is. I take my
wife
Directly from the people; and she
comes,
As Austria's daughter to imperial
France,
Betwixt her eagles, blinking not her
race,
From Margaret's Court at garret-
height, to meet
And wed me at St. James's, nor put
off
Her gown of serge for that. The
things we do,
We do; we'll wear no mask, as if we
blushed."

"Dear Romney, you're the poet," I
replied,
But felt my smile too mournful for
my word,
And turned and went. Ay, masks, I
thought,—beware
Of tragic masks we tie before the
glass,
Uplifted on the cothurn half a yard

Above the natural stature! we would
play
Heroic parts to ourselves, and end,
perhaps,
As impotently as Athenian wives
Who shrieked in fits at the Eumeni-
des.

His foot pursued me down the stair.
"At least
You'll suffer me to walk with you
beyond
These hideous streets, these graves,
where men alive,
Packed close with earthworms, burr
unconsciously
About the plague that slew them: let
me go.
The very women pelt their souls in
mud
At any woman who walks here alone,
How came you here alone?—you are
ignorant."

We had a strange and melancholy
walk:
The night came drizzling downward
in dark rain,
And as we walked, the color of the
time,
The act, the presence, my hand upon
his arm,
His voice in my ear, and mine to my
own sense,
Appeared unnatural. We talked
modern books
And daily papers, Spanish marriage-
schemes
And English climate—was't so cold
last year?
And will the wind change by to-mor-
row morn?
Can Guizot stand? is London full?
is trade
Competitive? has Dickens turned his
hinge
A-pinch upon the fingers of the great?
And are potatoes to grow mythical
Like moly? will the apple die out too?
Which way is the wind to-night?
south-east? due east?
We talked on fast, while every com-
mon word
Seemed tangled with the thunder at
one end,
And ready to pull down upon our
heads
A terror out of sight. And yet to
pause

AURORA LEIGH.

Were surelier mortal: we tore greedily up
All silence, all the innocent breathing-points,
As if, like pale conspirators in haste,
We tore up papers where our signatures
Imperilled us to an ugly shame or death.

I cannot tell you why it was. 'Tis plain
We had not loved nor hated: wherefore dread
To spill gunpowder on ground safe from fire?
Perhaps we had lived too closely to diverge
So absolutely: leave two clocks, they say,
Wound up to different hours, upon one shelf,
And slowly, through the interior wheels of each,
The blind mechanic motion sets itself A-throb to feel out for the mutual time.
It was not so with us, indeed: while he
Struck midnight, I kept striking six at dawn;
While he marked judgment, I, redemption-day:
And such exception to a general law Imperious upon inert matter even,
Might make us, each to either, insecure,
A beckoning mystery, or a troubling fear.

I mind me, when we parted at the door,
How strange his good-night sounded, — like good-night
Beside a deathbed, where the morrow's sun
Is sure to come too late for more good days.
And all that night I thought . . . "Good-night," said he.

And so a month passed. Let me set it down
At once, — I have been wrong, I have been wrong.
We are wrong always when we think too much
Of what we think or are: albeit our thoughts

Be verily bitter as self-sacrifice,
We're no less selfish. If we sleep on rocks
Or roses, sleeping past the hour of noon,
We're lazy. This I write against myself.

I had done a duty in the visit paid
To Marian, and was ready otherwise
To give the witness of my presence
and name
Whenever she should marry. Which, I thought,
Sufficed. I even had cast into the scale
An overweight of justice toward the match.
The Lady Waldemar had missed her tool,
And broken it in the lock as being too straight
For a crooked purpose; while poor Marian Erle
Missed nothing in my accents or my acts:
I had not been ungenerous on the whole,
Nor yet untender: so enough. I felt
Tired, overworked: this marriage somewhat jarred;
Or, if it did not, all the bridal noise,
The pricking of the map of life with pins,
In schemes of . . . "Here we'll go," and "There we'll stay,"
And "Everywhere we'll prosper in our love,"
Was scarce my business: let them order it:
Who else should care? I threw myself aside,
As one who had done her work, and shuts her eyes
To rest the better.
I, who should have known,
Forereckoned mischief! Where we disavow
Being keeper to our brother, we're his Cain.

I might have held that poor child to my heart
A little longer! 'twould have hurt me much
To have hastened by its beats the marriage-day,
And kept her safe meantime from tampering hands,

Or, peradventure, traps. What drew
me back
From telling Romney plainly the de-
signs
Of Lady Waldemar, as spoken out
To me . . . me? had I any right, ay,
right,
With womanly compassion and re-
serve
To break the fall of woman's impu-
dence?—
To stand by calmly, knowing what I
knew,
And hear him call her *good*?
Distrust that word.
"There is none good save God," said
Jesus Christ
If he once, in the first creation-week,
Called creatures good, forever after-
ward,
The Devil only has done it, and his
heirs,
The knaves who win so, and the fools
who lose:
The world's grown dangerous. In the
middle age
I think they called malignant fays
and imps
Good people. A good neighbor, even
in this,
Is fatal sometimes, cuts your morning
up
To mince-meat of the very smallest
talk,
Then helps to sugar her bohea at
night
With your reputation. I have known
good wifes,
As chaste, or nearly so, as Potiphar's;
And good, good mothers, who would
use a child
To better an intrigue; good friends,
beside,
(Very good) who hung succinctly
round your neck
And sucked your breath, as cats are
fabled to do
By sleeping infants. And we all have
known
Good critics who have stamped out
poet's hope,
Good statesmen who pulled ruin on
the state,
Good patriots who for a theory risked
a cause,
Good kings who disembowelled for a
tax,
Good popes who brought all good to
jeopardy,

Good Christians who sate still in easy-
chairs
And damned the general world for
standing up.
Now may the good God pardon all
good men!

How bitterly I speak! how certainly
The innocent white milk in us is
turned
By much persistent shining of the
sun!
Shake up the sweetest in us long
enough
With men, it drops to foolish curd,
too sour
To feed the most untender of Christ's
lambs.

I should have thought, — a woman of
the world
Like her I'm meaning, centre to her-
self
Who has wheeled on her own pivot
half a life
In isolated self-love and self-will,
As a windmill seen at distance radi-
ating
Its delicate white vans against the
sky,
So soft and soundless, simply beauti-
ful,
Seen nearer, — what a roar and tear
it makes,
How it grinds and bruises! — if she
loves at last,
Her love's a re-adjustment of self-
love,
No more, — a need felt of another's
use
To her one advantage, as the mill
wants grain,
The fire wants fuel, the very wolf
wants prey,
And none of these is more unscrupu-
lous
Than such a charming woman when
she loves.
She'll not be thwarted by an obstacle
So trifling as . . . her soul is . . .
much less yours! —
Is God a consideration? — she loves
you,
Not God: she will not flinch for him
indeed:
She did not for the Marchioness of
Perth,
When wanting tickets for the fancy
ball.

She loves you, sir, with passion, to
lunacy,
She loves you like her diamonds . . .
almost.

Well,
A month passed so, and then the no-
tice came,
On such a day the marriage at the
church.
I was not backward.

Half Saint Giles in frieze
Was bidden to meet Saint James in
cloth-of-gold,
And, after contract at the altar, pass
To eat a marriage-feast on Hain-
stead Heath.

Of course the people came in uncom-
pelled,
Lame, blind, and worse; sick, sor-
rowful, and worse;
The humors of the peccant social
wound

All pressed out, poured down upon
Pinlico,
Exasperating the unaccustomed air
With a hideous interfusion. You'd
suppose

A finished generation, dead of plague,
Swept outward from their graves into
the sun,

The moil of death upon them. What
a sight!

A holiday of miserable men
Is sadder than a burial-day of kings.

They clogged the streets, they oozed
into the church
In a dark slow stream, like blood.

To see that sight,
The noble ladies stood up in their
pews,

Some pale for fear, a few as red for
hate,

Some simply curious, some just insol-
ent.

And some in wondering scorn, "What
next? what next?"

These crushed their delicate rose lips
from the smile.

That misbecame them in a holy
place,

With broidered hem of perfumed
handkerchiefs;

Those passed the salts, with confi-
dence of eyes,

And simultaneous shiver of moire
silk;

While all the aisles, alive and black
with heads,

Crawled slowly toward the altar from
the street,
As bruised snakes crawl and hiss out
of a hole
With shuddering involution, swaying
slow
From right to left, and then from left
to right,
In pants and pauses. What an ugly
crest
Of faces rose upon you everywhere
From that crammed mass! you did
not usually
See faces like them in the open
day:
They hide in cellars, not to make you
mad
As Romney Leigh is. Faces! O my
God,
We call those faces?—men's and wo-
men's . . . ay,
And children's; babies, hanging like
a rag
Forgotten on their mother's neck—
poor mouths,
Wiped clean of mother's milk by
mother's blow
Before they are taught her cursing.
Faces? . . . phew,
We'll call them vices, festering to
despairs,
Or sorrows, petrifying to vices: not
A finger-touch of God left whole on
them,
All ruined, lost, the countenance worn
out
As the garment, the will dissolute as
the act,
The passions loose and draggling in
the dirt,
To trip a foot up at the first free
step!
Those faces?—'twas as if you had
stirred up hell
To heave its lowest dred-fiends upper-
most
In fiery swirls of slime, such strangled
fronts,
Such obdurate jaws, were thrown up
constantly
To twit you with your race, corrupt
your blood,
And grind to devilish colors all your
dreams
Henceforth, though haply you should
drop asleep
By clink of silver waters, in a muse
On Raffael's mild Madonna of the
Bird.

I've waked and slept through many nights and days
Since then; but still that day will catch my breath
Like a nightmare. There are fatal days, indeed,
In which the fibrous years have taken root
So deeply, that they quiver to their tops
Whene'er you stir the dust of such a day.

My cousin met me with his eyes and hand,
And then, with just a word, . . . that "Mariam Erle
Was coming with her bridesmaids presently,"
Made haste to place me by the altar-stair
Where he and other noble gentlemen
And high-born ladies waited for the bride.

We waited. It was early: there was time
For greeting and the morning's compliment;
And gradually a ripple of women's talk
Arose and fell, and tossed about a spray
Of English ss, soft as a silent hush,
And, notwithstanding, quite as audible
As louder phrases thrown out by the men.
— "Yes, really, if we need to wait in church
We need to talk there." — "She? 'tis Lady Ayr,
In blue, not purple! that's the dowager."
"She looks as young" — "She flirts as young, you mean.
Why, if you had seen her upon Thursday night,
You'd call Miss Norris modest." — "You again!
I waltzed with you three hours back.
Up at six,
Up still at ten; scarce time to change one's shoes:
I feel as white and sulky as a ghost,
So pray don't speak to me, Lord Belcher." — "No,
I'll look at you instead, and it's enough

While you have that face." — "In church, my lord! fie, fie!"
— "Adair, you staid for the Division?" — "Lost By one." — "The devil it is! I'm sorry for't.
And if I had not promised Mistress Grove . . .
"You might have kept your word to Liverpool."
— "Constituents must remember, after all,
We're mortal." — "We remind them of it." — "Hark, The bride comes! here she comes in a stream of milk!"
— "There? Dear, you are asleep still: don't you know The five Miss Granvilles? always dressed in white To show they're ready to be married."
"Lower!"
The aunt is at your elbow." — "Lady Maud,
Did Lady Waldemar tell you she had seen
This girl of Leigh's?" — "No — wait! 'twas Mistress Brookes
Who told me Lady Waldemar told her —
No, 'twasn't Mistress Brookes." — "She's pretty?" — "Who? Mistress Brookes? Lady Waldemar?" — "How hot!
Pray is't the law to-day we're not to breathe?
You're treading on my shawl — I thank you, sir."
— "They say the bride's a mere child, who can't read,
But knows the things she shouldn't, with wide-awake Great eyes. I'd go through fire to look at her."
— "You do, I think." — "And Lady Waldemar
(You see her; sitting close to Romney Leigh,
How beautiful she looks, a little flushed!)
Has taken up the girl, and methodized Leigh's folly. Should I have come here, you suppose,
Except she'd ask me?" — "She'd have served him more By marrying him herself."
"Ah — there she comes, The bride, at last!"
"Indeed, no. Past eleven.

She puts off her patched petticoat to-day
 And puts on May-fair manners, so begins
 By setting us to wait." — "Yes, yes, this Leigh
 Was always odd: it's in the blood, I think.
 His father's uncle's cousin's second son
 Was, was . . . you understand me; and for him,
 He's stark — has turned quite lunatic upon
 This modern question of the poor — the poor.
 An excellent subject when you're moderate.
 You've seen Prince Albert's model lodging-house?
 Does honor to his Royal Highness. Good!
 But would he stop his carriage in Cheapside
 To shake a common fellow by the fist
 Whose name was . . . Shakspeare? no. We draw a line;
 And if we stand not by our order, we In England, we fall headlong. Here's a sight, —
 A hideous sight, a most indecent sight!
 My wife would come, sir, or I had kept her back.
 By heaven, sir, when poor Damiens' trunk and limbs
 Were torn by horses, women of the court
 Stood by and stared, exactly as to-day
 On this dismembering of society,
 With pretty, troubled faces."

"Now, at last. She comes now."

"Where? who sees? you push me, sir,
 Beyond the point of what is mannerly.
 You're standing, madam, on my second bounce,
 I do beseech you" . . .

"No — it's not the bride, Half-past eleven. How late! The bridegroom, mark, Gets anxious and goes out."

"And, as I said, These Leights! our best blood running in the rut!
 It's something awful. We had par-doned him

A simple misalliance got up aside For a pair of sky-blue eyes: the House of Lords Has winked at such things, and we've all been young. But here's an intermarriage reasoned out, A contract (carried boldly to the light To challenge observation, pioneer Good acts by a great example) 'twixt the extremes Of martyred society, — on the left The well-born, on the right the merchant mob, To treat as equals! — 'tis anarchical; It means more than it says; 'tis damnable. Why, sir, we can't have even our coffee good, Unless we strain it."

"Here, Miss Leigh!"

"Lord Howe,

You're Romney's friend. What's all this waiting for?"

"I cannot tell. The bride has lost her head (And way, perhaps) to prove her sympathy With the bridegroom."

"What, — you also disapprove!"

"Oh, I approve of nothing in the world," He answered, "not of you, still less of me, Nor even of Romney, though he's worth us both. We're all gone wrong. The tune in us is lost; And whistling down back alleys to the moon Will never catch it."

Let me draw Lord Howe. A born aristocrat, bred radical, And educated socialist, who still Goes floating, on traditions of his kind, Across the theoretic flood from France, Though, like a drenched Noah on a rotten deck, Scarce safer for his place there. He, at least, Will never land on Ararat, he knows, To recommence the world on the new plan: Indeed, he thinks said world had better end.

He sympathizes rather with the fish
Outside than with the drowned
paired beasts within,
Who cannot couple again or multiply,—
And that's the sort of Noah he is,
Lord Howe.
He never could be any thing complete,
Except a loyal, upright gentleman,
A liberal landlord, graceful dinner-out,
And entertainer more than hospitable,
Whom authors dine with, and forget
the hock.
Whatever he believes, and it is much,
But nowise certain, now here and
now there,
He still has sympathies beyond his
creed.
Diverting him from action. In the
House
No party counts upon him, while for
all
His speeches have a noticeable
weight.
Men like his books too (he has written
ten books),
Which, safe to lie beside a bishop's
chair,
At times outreach themselves with
jets of fire
At which the foremost of the progressists
May warm audacious hands in passing by.
Of stature over-tall, lounging for
ease;
Light hair, that seems to carry a wind
in it;
And eyes, that, when they look on
you, will lean
Their whole weight, half in indolence,
and half
In wishing you unmitigated good,
Until you know not if to flinch from
him,
Or thank him. — 'Tis Lord Howe.
 "We're all gone wrong,"
Said he; "and Romney, that dear
friend of ours,
Is nowise right. There's one true
thing on earth,
That's love; he takes it up, and
dresses it,
And acts a play with it, as Hamlet
did,
To show what cruel uncles we have
been,

And how we should be uneasy in our
minds,
While he, Prince Hamlet, weds a
pretty maid
(Who keeps us too long waiting we'll
confess).
By symbol to instruct us formally
To fill the ditches up 'twixt class and
class,
And live together in phalansteries.
What then? — he's mad, our Hamlet!
 clap his play,
And bind him."
 "Ah, Lord Howe! this spectacle
Pulls stronger at us than the Dane's.
 See there!
The crammed aisles heave and strain
and steam with life;
Dear Heaven, what life!"
 "Why, yes, — a poet sees;
Which makes him different from a
common man.
I, too, see somewhat, though I can-
not sing:
I should have been a poet, only that
My mother took fright at the ugly
world,
And bore me tongue-tied. If you'll
grant me now
That Romney gives us a fine actor-
piece
To make us merry on his marriage-
morn,
The fable's worse than Hamlet's I'll
concede.
The terrible people, old and poor and
blind,
Their eyes eat out with plague and
poverty
From seeing beautiful and cheerful
sights,
We'll liken to a brutalized King Lear,
Led out, — by no means to clear
scores with wrongs, —
His wrongs are so far back, he has
forgot
(All's past like youth); but just to
witness here
A simple contract, — he upon his side,
And Regan with her sister Goneril,
And all the dappled courtiers and
court-fools,
On their side. Not that any of these
would say
They're sorry, neither. What is done
is done,
And violence is now turned privilege,
As cream turns cheese, if buried long
enough.

What could such lovely ladies have
to do
With the old man there in those ill-
odorous rags,
Except to keep the wind-side of him ?
Lear
Is flat and quiet, as a decent
grave:
He does not curse his daughters in
the least.
Be these his daughters ? Lear is
thinking of
His porridge chiefly . . . is it getting
cold
At Hampstead ? will the ale be
served in pots ?
Poor Lear, poor daughters ! Bravo,
Romney's play.
A murmur and a movement drew
around ;
A naked whisper touched us. Some-
thing wrong !
What's wrong ? The black crowd,
as an overstrained
Cord, quivered in vibration, and I
saw . . .
Was that *his* face I saw ? . . . his
. . . Romney Leigh's . . .
Which tossed a sudden horror like a
sponge
Into all eyes, while himself stood
white upon
The topmost altar-stair, and tried to
speak,
And failed, and lifted higher above
his head
A letter . . . as a man who drowns
and gasps.

My brothers, bear with me ! I am
very weak.
I meant but only good. Perhaps I
meant
so proudly, and God snatched the
circumstance,
and changed it therefore. There's
no marriage — none.
She leaves me, — she departs, — she
disappears,
lose her. Yet I never forced her
‘ay’
to have her ‘no’ so cast into my
teeth
manner of an accusation, thus.
My friends you are dismissed. Go,
eat and drink
According to the programme — and
farewell ! ”

He ended. There was silence in the
church.
We heard a baby sucking in its sleep
At the farthest end of the aisle. Then
spoke a man,
“ Now, look to it, coves, that all the
beef and drink
Be not flitched from us, like the other
fun ;
For beer's spilt easier than a wo-
man's lost !
This gentry is not honest with the
poor :
They bring us up, to trick us.” — “ Go
it, Jim ! ”
A woman screamed back. “ I'm a
tender soul ;
I never banged a child at two years
old,
And drew blood from him, but I
sobbed for it
Next moment, and I've had a plague
of seven.
I'm tender : I've no stomach even for
beef,
Until I know about the girl that's
lost,
That's killed mayhap. I did mis-
doubt at first,
The fine lord meant no good by her
or us.
He, maybe, got the upper hand of her
By holding up a wedding-ring, and
then . . .
A choking finger on her throat last
night,
And just a clever tale to keep us still,
As she is, poor lost innocent. ‘ Dis-
appear ! ’
Who ever disappears, except a ghost ?
And who believes a story of a ghost ?
I ask you, would a girl go off, instead
Of staying to be married ? A fine
tale !
A wicked man, I say, a wicked man !
For my part I would rather starve on
gin
Than make my dinner on his beef and
beer.”
At which a cry rose up, “ We'll have
our rights.
We'll have the girl, the girl ! Your
ladies there
Are married safely and smoothly
every day,
And she shall not drop through into a
trap
Because she's poor and of the people.
Shame ! ”

We'll have no tricks played off by
gentle folks.
We'll see her righted."

Through the rage and roar
I heard the broken words which Romney flung
Among the turbulent masses, from
the ground
He held still with his masterful pale
face,
As huntsmen throw the ration to the
pack,
Who, falling on it headlong dog on
dog
In heaps of fury, rend it, swallow it
up
With yelling hound-jaws,—his indignant words,
His suppliant words, his most pathetic words,
Whereof I caught the meaning here
and there
By his gesture . . . torn in morsels,
yelled across,
And so devoured. From end to end,
the church
Rocked round us like the sea in
storm, and then
Broke up like the earth in earthquake. Men cried out,
"Police!" and women stood, and shrieked for God,
Or dropt and swooned; or, like a herd
of deer,
(For whom the black woods suddenly
grew alive,
Unleashing their wild shadows down
the wind
To hunt the creatures into corners,
back
And forward), madly fled, or blindly
fell,
Trod screeching underneath the feet
of those
Who fled and screeched.

The last sight left to me
Was Romney's terrible calm face
above
The tumult. The last sound was,
"Pull him down!
Strike—kill him!" Stretching my
unreasoning arms,
As men in dreams, who vainly interpose
'Twixt gods and their undoing, with
a cry
I struggled to precipitate myself
Headforemost to the rescue of my
soul

In that white face . . . till some one
caught me back,
And so the world went out,—I felt
no more.

What followed was told after by Lord Howe,
Who bore me senseless from the
strangling crowd
In church and street, and then re-
turned alone
To see the tumult quelled. The men
Had fallen as thunder on a roaring
fire,
And made all silent, while the people's smoke
Passed eddying slowly from the emp-
tied aisles.

Here's Marian's letter, which a ragged child
Brought running, just as Romney at
the porch
Looked out expectant of the bride.
He sent
The letter to me by his friend, Lord Howe,
Some two hours after, folded in a
sheet
On which his well-known hand had
left a word.
Here's Marian's letter.
"Noble friend, dear saint,
Be patient with me. Never think me
vile,
Who might to-morrow morning be
your wife
But that I loved you more than such
a name.
Farewell, my Romney. Let me write
it once,—
My Romney.
" 'Tis so pretty a coupled word,
I have no heart to pluck it with a
blot.
We say, 'My God' sometimes, upon
our knees.
Who is not therefore vexed: so bear
with it . . .
And me, I know I'm foolish, weak,
and vain;
Yet most of all I'm angry with myself
For losing your last footstep on the
stair
That last time of your coming,—yes-
terday!
The very first time I lost step of
yours,

(Its sweetness comes the next to what
you speak.)
But yesterday sobs took me by the
throat
And cut me off from music.
“Mister Leigh,
You'll set me down as wrong in many
things.
You've praised me, sir, for truth—
and now you'll learn
had not courage to be rightly true,
once began to tell you how she
came,
The woman . . . and you stared upon
the floor
in one of your fixed thoughts . . .
which put me out
for that day. After, some one spoke
of me
so wisely, and of you so tenderly,
persuading me to silence for your
sake
Well, well! it seems this moment I
was wrong
in keeping back from telling you the
truth;
here might be truth betwixt us two,
at least,
nothing else. And yet 'twas dan-
gerous.
Suppose a real angel came from
heaven
to live with men and women! he'd
go mad,
no considerate hand should tie a
blind
cross his piercing eyes. 'Tis thus
with you:
you see us too much in your heavenly
light.
always thought so, angel, and in-
deed
there's danger that you beat yourself
to death
against the edges of this alien world,
some divine and fluttering pity.
“Yes,
would be dreadful for a friend of
yours
see all England thrust you out of
doors,
and mock you from the windows.
You might say,
think (that's worse), ‘There's some
one in the house
miss and love still.’ Dreadful!
“Very kind,
say you, mark, was Lady Walde-
mar.

She came to see me nine times, rather
ten—
So beautiful, she hurts one like the
day
Let suddenly on sick eyes.
“Most kind of all,
Your cousin—ah, most like you!
Ere you came
She kissed me mouth to mouth: I
felt her soul
Dip through her serious lips in holy
fire.
God help me; but it made me arro-
gant.
I almost told her that you would not
lose
By taking me to wife; though ever
since
I've pondered much a certain thing
she asked . . .
‘He loves you, Marian?’ . . . in a
sort of mild
Derisive sadness . . . as a mother
asks
Her babe, ‘You'll touch that star,
you think?’
“Farewell!
I know I never touched it.
“This is worst;
Babes grow, and lose the hope of
things above:
A silver threepence sets them leaping
high—
But no more stars! mark that.
“I've writ all night,
Yet told you nothing. God, if I could
die,
And let this letter break off innocent
Just here! But no—for your
sake . . .
“Here's the last:
I never could be happy as your wife,
I never could be harmless as your
friend,
I never will look more into your face
Till God says, ‘Look!’ I charge you
seek me not,
Nor vex yourself with lamentable
thoughts
That peradventure I have come to
grief;
Be sure I'm well, I'm merry, I'm at
ease,
But such a long way, long way, long
way off,
I think you'll find me sooner in my
grave,
And that's my choice, observe. For
what remains,

An over-generous friend will care for
me,
And keep me happy . . . happier . . .
“There’s a blot i
This ink runs thick . . . we light
girls lightly weep . . .
And keep me happier . . . was the
thing to say,
Than as your wife I could be.—Oh,
my star,
My saint, my soul! for surely you’re
my soul,
Through whom God touched me! I
am not so lost
I cannot thank you for the good you
did,
The tears you stopped, which fell
down bitterly,
Like these—the times you made me
weep for joy
At hoping I should learn to write
your notes,
And save the tiring of your eyes at
night;
And most for that sweet thrice you
kissed my lips,
Saying, ‘Dear Marian.’
“Twould be hard to read,
This letter, for a reader half as
learned;
But you’ll be sure to master it in
spite
Of ups and downs. My hand shakes,
I am blind;
I’m poor at writing at the best—and
yet
I tried to make my *ys* the way you
showed
Farewell! Christ love you! Say,
‘Poor Marian!’ now.”
Poor Marian! — wanton Marian! —
was it so,
Or so? For days, her touching, fool-
ish lines
We mused on with conjectural fan-
tasy,
As if some riddle of a summer-cloud
On which one tries unlike similitudes,
Of now a spotted hydra-skin cast off,
And now a screen of carven ivory
That shuts the heavens’ conventional
secrets up
From mortals over-bold. We sought
the sense.
She loved him so perhaps (such words
mean love.)
That, worked on by some shrewd per-
fidious tongue,

(And then I thought of Lady Walde-
mar)
She left him not to hurt him; or per-
haps
She loved one in her class; or did not
love,
But mused upon her wild bad tramp-
ing life,
Until the free blood fluttered at her
heart,
And black bread eaten by the road-
side hedge
Seemed sweeter than being put to
Romney’s school
Of philanthropical self-sacrifice
Irrevocably. Girls are girls, be-
side,
Thought I, and like a wedding by one
rule.
You seldom catch these birds except
with chaff.
They feel it almost an immoral thing
To go out and be married in broad
day,
Unless some winning special flattery
should
Excuse them to themselves for’t . . .
“No one parts
Her hair with such a silver line as
you,
One moonbeam from the forehead to
the crown!”
Or else . . . “You bite your lip in
such a way
It spoils me for the smiling of the
rest;”
And so on. Then a worthless gaud or
two
To keep for love,—a ribbon for the
neck,
Or some glass pin,—they have their
weight with girls.
And Romney sought her many days
and weeks.
He sifted all the refuse of the town,
Explored the trains, inquired among
the ships,
And felt the country through from
end to end;
No Marian! Though I hinted what
I knew,—
A friend of his had reasons of her
own
For throwing back the match,—he
would not hear:
The lady had been ailing ever since,
The shock had harmed her. Some-
thing in his tone

Repressed me; something in me
shamed my doubt

To a sigh repressed too. He went on
to say,

That, putting questions where his
Marian lodged,

He found she had received for vis-
itors —

Besides himself and Lady Waldemar,
And, that once, me — a dubious wo-
man dressed

Beyond us both: the rings upon her
hands

Had dazed the children when she
threw them pence;

"She wore her bonnet as the queen
might hers,

To show the crown," they said, — "a
scarlet crown

Of roses that had never been in bud."

When Romney told me that, for now
and then

He came to tell me how the search
advanced,

His voice dropped. I bent forward for
the rest.

The woman had been with her, it ap-
peared,

At first from week to week, then day
by day

And last, 'twas sure . . .

I looked upon the ground
To escape the anguish of his eyes, and
asked,

As low as when you speak to mourn-
ers new

If those they cannot bear yet to call
dead,

If Marian had as much as named to
him

Certain Rose, an early friend of
hers,

Ruined creature."

"Never!" Starting up,
He strode from side to side about the
room,
Post like some prisoned lion sprung
awake,

Who has felt the desert sting him
through his dreams.

What was I to her, that she should
tell me aught?

Friend! was I a friend? I see all
clear,

Such devils would pull angels out of
heaven,

Provided they could reach them: 'tis
their pride,

And that's the odds 'twixt soul and
body plague!

The veriest slave who drops in Cairo's
street

Cries, "Stand off from me!" to the
passengers;

While these blotched souls are eager
to infect,

And blow their bad breath in a sister's
face,

As if they got some ease by it."

I broke through.

"Some natures catch no plagues. I've
read of bales

Found whole, and sleeping by the
spotted breast

Of one a full day dead. I hold it
true,

As I'm a woman and know woman-
hood,

That Marian Erle, however lured from
place,

Deceived in way, keeps pure in aim
and heart

As snow that's drifted from the gar-
den-bank

To the open road."

'Twas hard to hear him laugh.
"The figure's happy. Well, a dozen

Carts

And trampers will secure you pres-
ently

A fine white snow-drift. Leave it
there, your snow!

'Twill pass for soot ere sunset. Pure
in aim?

She's pure in aim, I grant you, like
myself,

Who thought to take the world upon
my back

To carry it o'er a chasm of social
ill,

And end by letting slip, through im-
potence,

A single soul, a child's weight in a
soul,

Straight down the pit of hell! Yes, I
and she

Have reason to be proud of our pure
aims."

Then softly, as the last repenting
drops

Of a thunder-shower, he added, "The
poor child,

Poor Marian! 'twas a luckless day for
her,

When first she chanced on my philan-
thropy."

He drew a chair beside me, and sate down;
 And I instinctively — as women use
 Before a sweet friend's grief, when
 in his ear
 They hum the tune of comfort, though
 themselves
 Most ignorant of the special words of
 such,
 And quiet so and fortify his brain,
 And give it time and strength for feel-
 ing out
 To reach the availing sense beyond
 that sound —
 Went murmuring to him what, if
 written here,
 Would seem not much, yet fetched
 him better help
 Than peradventure if it had been
 more.

I've known the pregnant thinkers of
 our time,
 And stood by breathless, hanging on
 their lips,
 When some chromatic sequence of
 fine thought
 In learned modulation phrased itself
 To an unconjectured harmony of
 truth;
 And yet I've been more moved, more
 raised, I say,
 By a simple word . . . a broken, easy
 thing
 A three-years infant might at need
 repeat,
 A look, a sigh, a touch upon the palm,
 Which meant less than "I love you,"
 than by all
 The full-voiced rhetoric of those mas-
 ter-mouths.

"Ah, dear Aurora," he began at last,
 His pale lips fumbling for a sort of
 smile,
 "Your printer's devils have not spoilt
 your heart:
 That's well. And who knows, but
 long years ago
 When you and I talked, you were
 somewhat right
 In being so peevish with me? You,
 at least,
 Have ruined no one through your
 dreams. Instead,
 You've helped the facile youth to live
 youth's day
 With innocent distraction, still, per-
 haps

Suggestive of things better than your
 rhymes.
 The little shepherd-maiden, eight
 years old,
 I've seen upon the mountains of Vau-
 cluse,
 Asleep i' the sun, her head upon her
 knees,
 The flocks all scattered, is more lau-
 dable
 Than any sheep-dog trained imper-
 fectly,
 Who bites the kids through too much
 zeal."

"I look
 As if I had slept, then?"
 He was touched at once
 By something in my face. Indeed,
 'twas sure
 That he and I, despite a year or two
 Of younger life on my side, and on
 his
 The heaping of the years' work on
 the days,
 The three-hour speeches from the
 member's seat,
 The hot committees in and out of
 doors,
 The pamphlets, "Arguments," "Col-
 lective Views,"
 Tossed out as straw before sick
 houses, just
 To show one's sick, and so be trod to
 dirt,
 And no more use, — through this
 world's underground
 The burrowing, groping effort,
 whence the arm
 And heart come torn, — 'twas sure
 that he and I
 Were, after all, unequally fatigued;
 That he, in his developed manhood,
 stood
 A little sunburnt by the glare of
 life,
 While I . . . it seemed no sun had
 shone on me,
 So many seasons I had missed my
 springs.
 My cheeks had pined and perished
 from their orbs,
 And all the youth, blood in them had
 grown white
 As dew on autumn cyclamens: alone
 My eyes and forehead answered for
 my face.

He said, "Aurora, you are changed
 — are ill!"

"Not so, my cousin,—only not asleep," I answered, smiling gently. "Let it be."

You scarcely found the poet of Vau-cluse
As drowsy as the shepherds. What is art
But life upon the larger scale, the higher,
When, graduating up in a spiral line
Of still expanding and ascending gyres,
It pushes toward the intense significance
Of all things, hungry for the Infinite?
Art's life; and where we live, we suffer and toil."

He seemed to sift me with his painful eyes.
" You take it gravely, cousin: you refuse
Your dreamland's right of common, and green rest.
You break the mythic turf where danced the nymphs,
With crooked ploughs of actual life, let in
The axes to the legendary woods,
To pay the poll-tax. You are fallen indeed
On evil days, you poets, if yourselves
Can praise that art of yours no otherwise;
And if you cannot . . . better take a trade
And be of use: 'twere cheaper for your youth."

" Of use!" I softly echoed, " there's the point
We sweep about forever in argument,
Like swallows which the exasperate, dying year
Sets spinning in black circles, round and round,
Preparing for far flights o'er unknown seas.
And we—where tend we?"
" Where?" he said, and sighed.
" The whole creation, from the hour we are born,
Perplexes us with questions. Not a stone
But cries behind us, every weary step,
'Where, where?' I leave stones to reply to stones.

Enough for me and for my fleshly heart
To hearken the invocations of my kind,
When men catch hold upon my shuddering nerves,
And shriek, 'What help? what hope? what bread i' the house?
What fire i' the frost?' There must be some response,
Though mine fail utterly. This social Sphinx
Who sits between the sepulchres and stews,
Makes mock and mow against the crystal heavens,
And bullies God,—exacts a word at least
From each man standing on the side of God,
However paying a sphinx-price for it.
We pay it also, if we hold our peace,
In pangs and pity. Let me speak and die.
Alas! you'll say I speak and kill instead."

I pressed in there. " The best men, doing their best, know peradventure least of what they do;
Men usefulllest i' the world are simply used;
The nail that holds the wood must pierce it first;
And he alone who wields the hammer sees
The work advanced by the earliest blow. Take heart."

" Ah, if I could have taken yours!" he said—
" But that's past now." Then rising,
— " I will take
At least your kindness and encouragement.
I thank you. Dear, be happy. Sing your songs,
If that's your way; but sometimes slumber too,
Nor tire too much with following, out of breath,
The rhymes upon your mountains of Delight.
Reflect, if art be in truth the higher life,
You need the lower life to stand upon In order to reach up unto that higher;

And none can stand a tiptoe in the place
He cannot stand in with two stable feet.
Remember then! for art's sake hold your life.

We parted so. I held him in respect.
I comprehended what he was in heart
And sacrificial greatness. Ay, but he
Supposed me a thing too small to deign to know.
He blew me, plainly, from the crucible
As some intruding, interrupting fly,
Not worth the pains of his analysis
Absorbed on nobler subjects. Hurt a fly!
He would not for the world: he's pitiful
To flies even. "Sing," says he, "and tease me still,
If that's your way, poor insect."
That's your way!

FIFTH BOOK.

AURORA LEIGH, be humble. Shall I hope
To speak my poems in mysterious tune
With man and nature? with the lavender-lymph
That trickles from successive galaxies
Still drop by drop adown the finger of God
In still new worlds? with summer-days in this
That scarce dare breathe, they are so beautiful?
With spring's delicious trouble in the ground,
Tormented by the quickened blood of roots,
And softly pricked by golden crocus-sheaves
In token of the harvest-time of flowers?
With winters and with autumns, and beyond
With the human heart's large seasons, when it hopes
And fears, joys, grieves, and loves? with all that strain

Of sexual passion, which devours the flesh
In a sacrament of souls? with mother's breasts,
Which, round the new-made creatures hanging there,
Throb luminous and harmonious like pure spheres?
With multitudinous life, and, finally,
With the great escapings of ecstatic souls,
Who, in a rush of too long imprisoned flame,
Their radiant faces upward, burn away
This dark of the body, issuing on a world
Beyond our mortal? Can I speak my verse
So plainly in tune to these things and the rest,
That men shall feel it catch them on the quick,
As having the same warrant over them
To hold and move them, if they will or no,
Alike imperious as the primal rhythm
Of that theurgic nature? I must fail,
Who fail at the beginning to hold and move
One man, and he my cousin, and he my friend,
And he born tender, made intelligent,
Inclined to ponder the precipitous sides
Of difficult questions, yet obtuse to me,
Of me, incurious! likes me very well,
And wishes me a paradise of good,—
Good looks, good means, and good digestion,—ay,
But otherwise evades me, puts me off
With kindness, with a tolerant gentleness,—
Too light a book for a grave man's reading! Go,
Aurora Leigh: be humble. There it is,
We women are too apt to look to one,
Which proves a certain impotence in art.
We strain our natures at doing something great,
Far less because it's something great to do
Than haply that we, so, command ourselves

As being not small, and more appreciable
To some one friend. We must have mediators
Betwixt our highest conscience and the judge;
Some sweet saint's blood must quicken in our palms,
Or all the life in heaven seems slow and cold;
Good only being perceived as the end of good,
And God alone pleased, — that's too poor, we think,
And not enough for us by any means.
Ay, Romney, I remember, told me once
We miss the abstract when we comprehend;
We miss it most when we aspire, — and fail.

Yet, so, I will not. This vile woman's way
Of trailing garments shall not trip me up;
I'll have no traffic with the personal thought
In art's pure temple. Must I work in vain,
Without the approbation of a man? I cannot be; it shall not. Fame itself,
that approbation of the general race,
resents a poor end, (though the arrow sped
not straight with vigorous finger to the white.)
and the highest fame was never reached except
what was aimed above it. Art for art,
is good for God himself, the essential Good!

I'll keep our aims sublime, our eyes erect,
though our woman-hands should shake and fall;
if we fail . . . But must we? —

Shall I fail? Greeks said grandly in their tragic phrase, no one be called happy till his death." Which I add, Let no one till his death be called unhappy. Measure not the work

Until the day's out and the labor done;
Then bring your gauges. If the day's work's scant,
Why, call it scant; affect no compromise;
And, in that we've nobly striven at least,
Deal with us nobly, women though we be,
And honor us with truth, if not with praise.

My ballads prospered; but the ballad's race
Is rapid for a poet who bears weights
Of thought and golden image. He can stand
Like Atlas, in the sonnet, and support
His own heaven's pregnant with dynastic stars;
But then he must stand still, nor take a step.

In that descriptive poem called "The Hills,"
The prospects were too far and indistinct.
'Tis true my critics said, "A fine view, that!"
The public scarcely cared to climb my book
For even the finest, and the public's right:
A tree's mere firewood, unless humanized;
Which well the Greeks knew when they stirred its bark
With close-pressed bosoms of subsid-ing nymphs,
And made the forest-rivers garrulous.
With babble of gods. For us, we are called to mark
A still more intimate humanity
In this inferior nature, or ourselves
Must fall like dead leaves trodden underfoot
By veritable artists. Earth (shut up)
By Adam, like a fakir in a box
Left too long buried) remained stiff and dry,
A mere dumb corpse, till Christ the Lord came down,
Unlocked the doors, forced open the blank eyes,

And used his kingly chrism to straighten out
 The leathery tongue turned back into the throat;
 Since when, she lives, remembers, palpitates
 In every limb, aspires in every breath,
 Embraces infinite relations. Now We want no half-gods, Panomphæan Joves,
 Fauns, Naiads, Tritons, Oreads, and the rest,
 To take possession of a senseless world
 To unnatural vampire-uses. See the earth,
 The body of our body, the green earth,
 Indubitably human like this flesh And these articulated veins through which
 Our heart drives blood! There's not a flower of spring
 That dies ere June, but vaunts itself allied
 By issue and symbol, by significance And correspondence, to that spirit-world
 Outside the limits of our space and time,
 Whereto we are bound. Let poets give it voice
 With human meanings, else they miss the thought,
 And henceforth step down lower, stand confessed
 Instructed poorly for interpreters, Thrown out by an easy cowslip in the text.
 Even so my pastoral failed: it was a book
 Of surface-pictures, pretty, cold, and false
 With literal transcript, — the worse done, I think,
 For being not ill done: let me set my mark
 Against such doings, and do otherwise.
 This strikes me. — If the public whom we know
 Could catch me at such admissions, I should pass
 For being right modest. Yet how proud we are
 In daring to look down upon ourselves!

The critics say that epics have died out
 With Agamemnon and the goat-nursed gods:
 I'll not believe it. I could never deem, As Payne Knight did, (the mythic mountaineer
 Who travelled higher than he was born to live,
 And showed sometimes the goitre in his throat Discoursing of an image seen through fog.)
 That Homer's heroes measured twelve feet high.
 They were but men: his Helen's hair turned gray Like any plain Miss Smith's who wears a front; And Hector's infant whimpered at a plume
 As yours last Friday at a turkey-cock.
 All actual heroes are essential men, And all men possible heroes: every age,
 Heroic in proportions, double-faced, Looks backward and before, expects a morn
 And claims an epos. Ay; but every age
 Appears to souls who live in't (ask Carlyle)
 Most unheroic. Ours, for instance, ours —
 The thinkers scout it, and the poets abound
 Who scorn to touch it with a finger-tip —
 A pewter age, mixed metal, silver-washed —
 An age of scum, spooned off the richer past, —
 An age of patches for old gaberdines, An age of mere transition, meaning nought
 Except that what succeeds must shame it quite
 If God please. That's wrong thinking, to my mind,
 And wrong thoughts make poor poems.
 Every age, Through being beheld too close, is ill discerned
 By those who have not lived past it. We'll suppose
 Mount Athos carved, as Alexander schemed,

To some colossal statue of a man.
The peasants, gathering brushwood
in his ear,
Had guessed as little as the browsing
goats

Of form or feature of humanity
Up there,—in fact, had travelled five
miles off

Or ere the giant image broke on them,
Full human profile, nose and chin
distinct,

Mouth muttering rhythms of silence
up the sky,

And fed at evening with the blood of
sons;

Grand torso,—hand that flung per-
petually

The largesse of a silver river down
To all the country pastures. 'Tis
even thus
With times we live in,—evermore
too great

To be apprehended near.
But poets should
Exert a double vision; should have
eyes

To see near things as comprehen-
sively

As if afar they took their point of
sight,

And distant things as intimately deep
As if they touched them. Let us
strive for this.

I do distrust the poet who discerns
No character or glory in his times,
And trundles back his soul five hun-
dred years,

Past moat and drawbridge, into a
castle-court,

To sing—oh, not of lizard or of toad
Alive i' the ditch there,—'twere ex-
cusable,

But of some black chief, half knight,
half sheep-lifter,

Some beauteous dame, half chattel
and half queen,

As dead as must be, for the greater
part,

The poems made on their chivalric
bones;

And that's no wonder: death inherits
death.

By, if there's room for poets in this
world
little overgrown, (I think there is)
their sole work is to represent the age,
their age, not Charlemagne's,—this
live, throbbing age,

That brawls, cheats, maddens, calcu-
lates, aspires,
And spends more passion, more hero-
ic heat,
Betwixt the mirrors of its drawing-
rooms,
Than Roland with his knights at
Roncesvalles.
To flinch from modern varnish, coat,
or flounce,
Cry out for togas and the picturesque,
Is fatal,—foolish too, King Arthur's
self
Was commonplace to Lady Guinevere;
And Camelot to minstrels seemed as
flat
As Fleet Street to our poets.

Never flinch,
But still, unscrupulously epic, catch
Upon the burning lava of a song
The full-veined, heaving, double-
breasted age,
That, when the next shall come, the
men of that
May touch the impress with reverent
hand, and say,
"Behold, behold, the paps we all
have sucked!"
This bosom seems to beat still, or at
least
It sets ours beating: this is living art,
Which thus presents and thus records
true life."

What form is best for poems? Let
me think
Of forms less, and the external.
Trust the spirit,
As sovereign nature does, to make the
form;
For otherwise we only imprison
spirit
And not embody. Inward evermore
To outward,—so in life, and so in art,
Which still is life.

Five acts to make a play.
And why not fifteen? why not ten?
or seven?
What matter for the number of the
leaves,
Supposing the tree lives and grows?
exact
The literal unities of time and place,
When 'tis the essence of passion to
ignore
Both time and place? Absurd. Keep
up the fire,
And leave the generous flames to
shape themselves.

'Tis true the stage requires obsequiousness
 To this or that convention; "exit" here
 And "enter" there; the points for clapping fixed,
 Like Jacob's white-peeled rods before the rams;
 And all the close-curled imagery clipped
 In manner of their fleece at shearing-time.
 Forget to prick the galleries to the heart
 Precisely at the fourth act, culminate
 Our five pyramidal acts with one act more,
 We're lost so: Shakspeare's ghost could scarcely plead
 Against our just damnation. Stand aside;
 We'll muse, for comfort, that last century,
 On this same tragic stage on which we have failed,
 A wiggless Hamlet would have failed the same.

And whosoever writes good poetry looks just to art. He does not write for you
 Or me, for London or for Edinburgh; He will not suffer the best critic known
 To step into his sunshine of free thought
 And self-absorbed conception, and exact
 An inch-long swerving of the holy lines.
 If virtue done for popularity defiles like vice, can art, for praise or hire,
 Still keep its splendor, and remain pure art?
 Eschew such serfdom. What the poet writes,
 He writes. Mankind accepts it if it suits,
 And that's success: if not, the poem's passed
 From hand to hand, and yet from hand to hand,
 Until the unborn snatch it, crying out In pity on their father's being so dull;
 And that's success too.

I will write no plays, Because the drama, less sublime in this,

Makes lower appeals; submits more menially;
 Adopts the standard of the public taste
 To chalk its height on; wears a dog-chain round
 Its regal neck, and learns to carry and fetch
 The fashions of the day to please the day;
 Fawns close on pit and boxes, who clap hands,
 Commanding chiefly its docility And humor in stage-tricks; or else, indeed,
 Gets hissed at, howled at, stamped at like a dog,
 Or worse, we'll say. For dogs, unjustly kicked,
 Yell, bite at need; but if your dramatist
 (Being wronged by some five hundred nobodies,
 Because their grosser brains most naturally
 Misjudge the fineness of his subtle wit)
 Shows teeth an almond's breath, protest the length
 Of a modest phrase, "My gentle countrymen,
 There's something in it haply of your fault,"
 Why then, besides five hundred nobodies,
 He'll have five thousand and five thousand more
 Against him,—the whole public, all the hoofs
 Of King Saul's father's asses, in full drove,
 And obviously deserve it. He appealed
 To these, and why say more if they condemn,
 Than if they praise him? Weep, my Æschylus,
 But low and far, upon Sicilian shores! For since 'twas Athens (so I read the myth)
 Who gave commission to that fatal weight
 The tortoise, cold and hard, to drop on thee
 And crush thee, better cover thy bald head.
 She'll hear the softest hum of Hyblan bee
 Before thy loudest protestation.

Then
The risk's still worse upon the modern stage:
I could not, for so little, accept success;
Nor would I risk so much, in ease and calm,
For manifester gains: let those who prize
Pursue them: I stand off. And yet forbid
That any irreverent fancy or conceit
Should litter in the drama's throne-room where
The rulers of our art, in whose full veins
Dynastic glories mingle, sit in strength
And do their kingly work, conceive, command,
And from the imagination's crucial heat
Catch up their men and women all afame
For action, all alive, and forced to prove
Their life by living out heart, brain, and nerve,
Until mankind makes witness, "These be men
As we are," and vouchsafes the greeting due
To Imogen and Juliet,—sweetest kin
On art's side.
'Tis that, honoring to its worth
The drama, I would fear to keep it down
To the level of the footlights. Dies no more
The sacrificial goat, for Bacchus slain,
His filmed eyes fluttered by the whirling white
Of choral vestures, troubled in his blood,
While tragic voices that clang'd keen as swords,
Leapt high together with the altar-flame,
And made the blue air wink. The waxen mask,
Which set the grand, still front of Themis' son
Upon the puckered visage of a player;
the buskin, which he rose upon and moved,
as some tall ship, first conscious of the wind,
weeps slowly past the piers; the mouthpiece, where

The mere man's voice, with all its breaths and breaks,
Went sheathed in brass, and clashed on even heights
Its phrased thunders, — these things are no more,
Which once were. And concluding, which is clear,
The growing drama has outgrown such toys
Of simulated stature, face, and speech,
It also peradventure may outgrow
The simulation of the painted scene,
Boards, actors, prompters, gaslight, and costume,
And take for a worthier stage the soul itself,
Its shifting fancies and celestial lights,
With all its grand orchestral silences
To keep the pauses of its rhythmic sounds.

Alas! I still see something to be done,
And what I do falls short of what I see,
Though I waste myself on doing.
Long green days,
Worn bare of grass and sunshine;
long calm nights,
From which the silken sleeps were fretted out, —

Be witness for me, with no amateur's irreverent haste and busy idleness
I set myself to art! What then? what's done?

What's done, at last?
Behold, at last, a book.
If life-blood's necessary, which it is, —
(By that blue vein a-throb on Mahomet's brow,
Each prophet-poet's book must show man's blood!)
If life-blood's fertilizing, I wrung mine
On every leaf of this, unless the drops slid heavily on one side, and left it dry.
That chances often. Many a fervid man
Writes books as cold and flat as graveyard stones
From which the lichen's scraped; and if St. Preux
Had written his own letters, as he might,
We had never wept to think of the little mole

'Neath Julie's drooping eyelid. Passion is
But something suffered, after all.
While art Sets action on the top of suffering,
The artist's part is both to be and do,
Transfixing with a special central power
The flat experience of the common man,
And turning outward, with a sudden wrench,
Half agony, half ecstasy, the thing He feels the inmost,—never felt the less,
Because he sings it. Does a torchless burn
For burning next reflectors of blue steel,
That *he* should be the colder for his place
'Twixt two incessant fires,—his personal life's,
And that intense refraction which burns back
Perpetually against him from the round
Of crystal conscience he was born into,
If artist-born? Oh, sorrowful, great gift
Conferred on poets, of a twofold life,
When one life has been found enough for pain!
We, staggering 'neath our burden as mere men,
Being called to stand up straight as demigods,
Support the intolerable strain and stress
Of the universal, and send clearly up
With voices broken by the human sob,
Our poems to find rhymes among the stars!
But soft,—a "poet" is a word soon said,
A book's a thing soon written. Nay, indeed,
The more the poet shall be questionable,
The more unquestionably comes his hook.
And this of mine—well, granting to myself
Some passion in it, furrowing up the flats,

Mere passion will not prove a volume worth Its gall and rags even. Bubbles round a keel Mean nought, excepting that the vessel moves.
There's more than passion goes to make a man Or book, which is a man too. I am sad.
I wonder if Pygmalion had these doubts, And, feeling the hard marble first relent, Grow supple to the straining of his arms, And tingle through its cold to his burning lip, Supposed his senses mocked, supposed the toil Of stretching past the known and seen to reach The archetypal beauty out of sight, Had made his heart beat fast enough for two, And with his own life dazed and blinded him! Not so. Pygmalion loved; and whoso loves Believes the impossible. But I am sad: I cannot thoroughly love a work of mine, Since none seems worthy of my thought and hope More highly mated. He has shot them down, My Phœbus Apollo, soul within my soul, Who judges by the attempted what's attained, And with the silver arrow from his height Has struck down all my works before my face, While I said nothing. Is there ought to say? I called the artist but a greateened man. He may be childless also, like a man. I labored on alone. The wind and dust And sun of the world beat blistering in my face; And hope, now for me, now against me, dragged My spirits onward, as some fallen balloon,

Which, whether caught by blossoming tree or bare,
Is torn alike. I sometimes touched my aim,
Or seemed, and generous souls cried out, "Be strong,
Take courage; now you're on our level — now!
The next step saves you." I was flushed with praise;
But, pausing just a moment to draw breath,
I could not choose but murmur to myself,
"Is this all? all that's done? and all that's gained?
If this, then, be success, 'tis dismallier Than any failure."

O my God, my God, O supreme Artist, who, as sole return For all the cosmic wonder of thy work, Demandest of us just a word . . . a name, "My Father!" thou hast knowledge, only thou, How dreary 'tis for women to sit still On winter nights, by solitary fires, And hear the nations praising them far off, Too far! ay, praising our quick sense of love, Our very heart of passionate womanhood, Which could not beat so in the verse, without Being present also in the unkissed lips, And eyes undried, because there's none to ask The reason they grew moist.

To sit alone, And think for comfort, how that very night Affianced lovers, leaning face to face, With sweet half-listenings for each other's breath, Are reading haply from a page of ours, To pause with a thrill (as if their cheeks had touched) When such a stanza, level to their mood, Seems floating their own thought out — "So I feel For thee," — "And I, for thee: this poet knows What everlasting love is!" — how that night

Some father, issuing from the misty ronds, Upon the luminous round of lamp and hearth, And happy children, having caught up first The youngest there, until it shrink and shriek To feel the cold chin prick its dimples through With winter from the hills, may throw i' the lap Of the eldest (who has learnt to drop her lids To hide some sweetness newer than last year's) Our book, and cry . . . "Ah, you, you care for rhymes: So here be rhymes to pore on under trees, When April comes to let you! I've been told They are not idle, as so many are, But set hearts beating pure, as well as fast. 'Tis yours, the book: I'll write your name in it, That so you may not lose, however lost In poet's lore and charming reverie, The thought of how your father thought of *you* In riding from the town."

To have our books Appraised by love, associated with love, While we sit loveless! is it hard, you think? At least 'tis mournful. Fame, indeed, 'twas said, Means simply love. It was a man said that. And then there's love and love: the love of all (To risk in turn a woman's paradox) Is but a small thing to the love of one. You bid a hungry child be satisfied With a heritage of many cornfields: nay, He says he's hungry; he would rather have That little barley-cake you keep from him While reckoning up his harvests. So with us; (Here, Romney, too, we fail to generalize!) We're hungry.

Hungry! But it's pitiful
 To wail like unweaned babes, and
 suck our thumbs, Because we're hungry. Who in all
 this world
 (Wherein we are haply set to pray and
 fast,
 And learn what good is by its oppo-
 site)
 Has never hungered? Woe to him
 who has found
 The meal enough! If Ugolino's full,
 His teeth have crunched some foul
 unnatural thing;
 For here satiety proves penury
 More utterly irremediable. And since
 We needs must hunger, better, for
 man's love
 Than God's truth! better, for epim-
 panions sweet.
 Than great convictions! Let us bear
 our weights,
 Preferring dreary hearths to desert
 souls.
 Well, well! they say we're envious,
 we who rhyme;
 But I—because I am a woman, per-
 haps,
 And so rhyme ill—am ill at envying.
 I never envied Graham his breadth of
 style,
 Which gives you, with a random
 smut or two,
 (Near-sighted critics analyze to
 smut)
 Such delicate perspectives of full
 life;
 Nor Belmore, for the unity of aim
 To which he cuts his cedar poems,
 fine,
 As sketchers do their pencils; nor
 Mark Gage
 For that caressing color and trans-
 cing tone
 Whereby you're swept away, and
 melted in
 The sensual element, which, with a
 back wave,
 Restores you to the level of pure
 souls,
 And leaves you with Plotinus. None
 of these,
 For native gifts or popular applause,
 I've envied; but for this,—that when
 by chance
 Says some one, "There goes Belmore,
 a great man!
 He leaves clean work behind him,
 and requires

No sweeper-up of the chips," . . . a
 girl I know,
 Who answers nothing, save with her
 brown eyes,
 Smiles unaware, as if a guardian saint
 Smiled in her; for this, too, that Gage
 comes home,
 And lays his last book's prodigal re-
 view
 Upon his mother's knee, where, years
 ago,
 He laid his childish spelling-book,
 and learned
 To chirp, and peck the letters from
 her mouth,
 As young birds must. "Well done,"
 she murmured then;
 She will not say it now more won-
 deringly,
 And yet the last "Well done" will
 touch him more,
 As catching up to-day and yesterday
 In a perfect chord of love. And so,
 Mark Gage,
 I envy you your mother—and you,
 Graham,
 Because you have a wife who loves
 you so,
 She half forgets, at moments, to be
 proud
 Of being Graham's wife, until a friend
 observes,
 "The boy here has his father's mas-
 sive brow,
 Done small in wax . . . if we push
 back the curls."

Who loves me? Dearest father,
 mother sweet,—
 I speak the names out sometimes by
 myself,
 And make the silence shiver. They
 sound strange,
 As Hindostane to an Ind-born man
 Accustomed many years to English
 speech;
 Or lovely poet-words grown obsolete,
 Which will not leave off singing. Up
 in heaven
 I have my father, with my mother's
 face
 Beside him in a blotch of heavenly
 light;
 No more for earth's familiar, house-
 hold use,
 No more. The best verse written by
 this hand
 Can never reach them where they
 sit, to seem

Well done to *them*. Death quite unfollows us,
Sets dreadful odds betwixt the live and dead,
And makes us part, as those at Babel did
Through sudden ignorance of a common tongue.
A living Caesar would not dare to play
At bowls with such as my dead father is.

And yet this may be less so than appears,
This change and separation. Sparrows five
For just two farthings, and God cares for each.
If God is not too great for little cares,
Is any creature, because gone to God ?
I've seen some men, veracious, no-wise mad,
Who have thought or dreamed, declared and testified,
They heard the dead a-ticking like a clock
Which strikes the hours of the eternities,
Beside them, with their natural ears, and known
That human spirits feel the human way,
And hate the unreasoning awe which waves them off
From possible communion. It may be.

At least, earth separates as well as heaven.
For instance, I have not seen Romney Leigh
Full eighteen months . . . add six,
you get two years.
They say he's very busy with good works,
Has parted Leigh Hall into almshouses.
He made one day an almshouse of his heart,
Which ever since is loose upon the latch
For those who pull the string.—I never did.

It always makes me sad to go abroad,
And now I'm sadder that I went to-night

Among the lights and talkers at Lord Howe's.
His wife is gracious, with her glossy braids,
And even voice, and gorgeous eyeballs, calm
As her other jewels. If she's somewhat cold,
Who wonders, when her blood has stood so long
In the ducal reservoir she calls her line
By no means arrogantly? She's not proud;
Not prouder than the swan is of the lake
He has always swum in: 'tis her element,
And so she takes it with a natural grace,
Ignoring tadpoles. She just knows, perhaps,
There are who travel without outriders,
Which isn't her fault. Ah, to watch her face,
When good Lord Howe expounds his theories
Of social justice and equality!
'Tis curious what a tender, tolerant bend
Her neck takes; for she loves him, likes his talk,
Such clever talk—that dear odd Algernon!"
She listens on, exactly as if he talked Some Scandinavian myth of Lemures,
Too pretty to dispute, and too absurd.

She's gracious to me as her husband's friend,
And would be gracious were I not a Leigh,
Being used to smile just so, without her eyes,
On Joseph Strangways, the Leeds mesmerist,
And Delia Dobbs, the lecturer from "the States,"
Upon the "Woman's question." Then, for him—
I like him: he's my friend. And all the rooms
Were full of crinkling silks that swept about
The fine dust of most subtle courtesies.
What then? Why, then we come home to be sad.

How lovely one I love not looked to-night!
 She's very pretty, Lady Waldemar.
 Her maid must use both hands to twist that coil
 Of tresses, then be careful lest the rich
 Bronze rounds should slip: she missed, though, a gray hair,
 A single one,—I saw it; otherwise
 The woman looked immortal. How they told,
 Those alabaster shoulders and bare breasts,
 On which the pearls, drowned out of sight in milk,
 Were lost, excepting for the ruby clasp.
 They split the amaranth velvet bodice down
 To the waist, or nearly, with the andacious press
 Of full-breathed beauty. If the heart within
 Were half as white!—but, if it were, perhaps
 The breast were closer covered, and the sight
 Less aspable by half, too.

I heard
 The young man with the German student's look—
 A sharp face, like a knife in a cleft stick,
 Which shot up straight against the parting line
 So equally dividing the long hair—
 Say softly to his neighbor (thirty-five)
 And mediæval), “Look that way, Sir Blaise.
 She's Lady Waldemar,—to the left—in red,—
 Whom Romney Leigh, our ablest man just now,
 Is soon about to marry.”

Then replied Sir Blaise Delorme, with quiet, priest-like voice,
 Too used to syllable damnations round
 To make a natural emphasis worth while,
 “Is Leigh your ablest man?—the same, I think,
 Once jilted by a recreant pretty maid
 Adopted from the people? Now, in change,

He seems to have plucked a flower from the other side
 Of the social hedge.”

“A flower, a flower!” exclaimed My German student, his own eyes full blown
 Bent on her. He was twenty, certainly.

Sir Blaise resumed with gentle arrogance,
 As if he had dropped his arms into a hat
 And gained the right to counsel, “My young friend,
 I doubt your ablest man's ability To get the least good or help meet for him,
 For Pagan phalanstery or Christian home,
 From such a flowery creature.”

“Beautiful!” My student murmured, rapt. “Mark how she stirs!
 Just waves her head, as if a flower indeed,
 Touched far off by the vain breath of our talk.”

At which that bilious Grimwald (he who writes For the Renovator), who had seemed absorbed
 Upon the table-book of autographs, (I dare say mentally he crunched the bones)
 Of all those writers, wishing them alive
 To feel his tooth in earnest), turned short round
 With low carnivorous laugh,—“A flower, of course!
 She neither sews nor spins, and takes no thought
 Of her garments . . . falling off.”

The student flinched; Sir Blaise the same; then both, drawing back their chairs
 As if they spied black-beetles on the floor,
 Pursued their talk, without a word being thrown
 To the critic.

Good Sir Blaise's brow is high, And noticeably narrow: a strong wind,
 You fancy, might unroof him suddenly,

And blow that great top attic off his head
So piled with feudal relics. You admire
His nose in profile, though you miss his chin;
But, though you miss his chin, you seldom miss
His ebon cross worn innermostly, (carved
For penance by a saintly Styrian monk
Whose flesh was too much with him,) slipping through
Some unaware unbuttoned casualty
Of the under waistcoat. With an absent air
Sir Blaise sate fingering it, and speaking low,
While I upon the sofa heard it all.

"My dear young friend, if we could bear our eyes,
Like blessedest St. Lucy, on a plate,
They would not trick us into choosing wives,
As doublets, by the color. Otherwise
Our fathers chose; and therefore,
when they had living
Their household keys about a lady's waist,
The sense of duty gave her dignity:
She kept her bosom holy to her babes,
And, if a moralist reproved her dress,
"Twas, "Too much starch!" and not, "Too little lawn!"

"Now, pshaw!" returned the other in a heat,
A little fretted by being called
"Young friend,"
Or so I took it, — "for St. Lucy's sake,
If she's the saint to swear by, let us leave
Our fathers, — plagued enough about our sons!"
(He stroked his beardless chin) "yes,
plagued, sir, plagued:
The future generations lie on us
As heavy as the nightmare of a seer;
Our meat and drink grow painful prophecy.
I ask you, have we leisure, if we liked,
To hollow out our weary hands to keep
Your intermittent rushlight of the past

From draughts in lobbies? Prejudice
of sex
And marriage-law . . . the socket drops them through
While we two speak, however may protest
Some over-delicate nostrils like your own,
'Gainst odors thence arising."
"You are young," Sir Blaise objected.
"If I am," he said
With fire, "though somewhat less so than I seem,"
The young run on before, and see the thing
That's coming. 'Reverence for the young!' I cry.
In that new church for which the world's near ripe,
You'll have the younger in the elder's chair,
Presiding with his ivory front of hope
O'er foreheads clawed by cruel carion birds
Of life's experience."
"Pray your blessing, sir," Sir Blaise replied good-humoredly.
"I plucked
A silver hair this morning from my beard,
Which left me your inferior. Would I were
Eighteen, and worthy to admonish you!
If young men of your order run before
To see such sights as sexual prejudice
And marriage-law dissolved, — in plainer words,
A general concubinage expressed
In a universal prurience, — the thing Is scarce worth running fast for, and you'd gain
By loitering with your elders." "
"Ah!" he said,
"Who, getting to the top of Pisgah-hill,
Can talk with one at bottom of the view,
To make it comprehensible? Why, Leigh
Himself, although our ablest man, I said,
Is scarce advanced to see as far as this;
Which some are. He takes up imperfectly

The social question, — by one handle,
— leaves
The rest to trail. A Christian socialist
Is Romney Leigh, you understand.” “Not I.
I disbelieve in Christian-Pagans,
much
As you in women-fishes. If we mix
Two colors, we lose both, and make a
third,
Distinct from either. Mark you! to
mistake
A color is the sign of a sick brain,
And mine, I thank the saints, is clear
and cool;
A neutral tint is here impossible.
The church—and by the church, I
mean, of course,
The catholic, apostolic, mother-
church —
Draws lines as plain and straight as
her own wall,
Inside of which are Christians, obvi-
ously.
And outside . . . dogs.”
“We thank you. Well I know
The ancient mother-church would
fain still bite,
For all her toothless gums, as Leigh
himself
Would fain be a Christian still, for all
his wit.
Pass that: you two may settle it for
me.
You're slow in England. In a month
I learnt
At Göttingen enough philosophy
To stock your English schools for
fifty years;
Pass that too. Here alone, I stop
you short,
— Supposing a true man like Leigh
could stand
Unequal in the stature of his life
To the height of his opinions. Choose
a wife
Because of a smooth skin? Not he,
not he!
He'd rail at Venus' self for creaking
shoes,
Unless she walked his way of right-
eousness;
And if he takes a Venus Meretrix
(No imputation on the lady there)
Be sure, that, by some sleight of
Christian art,
He has metamorphosed and converted
her
To a Blessed Virgin.”

“Soft!” Sir Blaise drew breath
As if it hurt him, — “Soft! no blasphem-
ing,
I pray you!”
“The first Christians did the thing:
Why not the last?” asked he of Göt-
tingen,
With just that shade of sneering on
the lip,
Compensates for the lagging of the
beard,—
“And so the case is. If that fairest
fair
Is talked of as the future wife of
Leigh,
She's talked of too, at least as cer-
tainly,
As Leigh's disciple. You may find
her name
On all his missions and commissions,
schools,
Asylums, hospitals: he had her
down,
With other ladies whom her starry
lead
Persuaded from their spheres, to his
country-place
In Shropshire, to the famed phalan-
stery
At Leigh Hall, christianized from
Fourier's own,
(In which he has planted out his sap-
ling stocks
Of knowledge into social nurseries)
And there they say she has tarried
half a week,
And milked the cows, and churned,
and pressed the curd,
And said 'My sister' to the lowest
drab.
Of all the assembled castaways: such
girls!
Ay, sided with them at the wash-
ing-tub —
Conceive, Sir Blaise, those naked
perfect arms,
Round glittering arms, plunged el-
bow-deep in suds,
Like wild swans hid in lilies all
a-shake.”
Lord Howe came up. “What, talk-
ing poetry
So near the image of the unfavoring
Muse?
That's you, Miss Leigh: I've watched
you half an hour,
Precisely as I watched the statue
called

A Pallas in the Vatican.— You mind
The face, Sir Blaise?— intensely calm
and sad,
As wisdom cut it off from fellow-
ship,
But *that* spoke louder.— Not a word
from you!

And these two gentleman were bold,
I marked,
And unabashed by even your si-
lence.” “Ah.”

Said I, “my dear Lord Howe, you
shall not speak
To a printing woman who has lost her
place
(The sweet safe corner of the house-
hold fire
Behind the heads of children) com-
pliments,
As if she were a woman. We who
have clipt
The curls before our eyes may see at
least
As plain as men do. Speak out, man
to man,
No compliments, beseech you.” “Friend to friend,
Let that be. We are sad to-night, I
saw,
(—Good-night, Sir Blaise! ah, Smith
— he has slipped away)

I saw you across the room, and staid,
Miss Leigh,
To keep a crowd of lion-hunters off,
With faces toward your jungle. There
were three:
A spacious lady, five feet ten, and fat,
Who has the devil in her (and there's
room)
For walking to and fro upon the
earth,
From Chippewa to China; she requires
Your autograph upon a tinted leaf
“Twixt Queen Pomare's and Emperor
Soulouque's.
Pray give it! she has energies, though
fat:
For me I'd rather see a rick on fire
Than such a woman angry. Then a
youth
Fresh from the backwoods, green as
the underboughs,
Asks modestly, Miss Leigh, to kiss
your shoe,
And adds he has an epic in twelve
parts,
Which when you've read, you'll do it
for his boot:

All which I saved you, and absorb
next week
Both manuscript and man,— because
a lord
Is still more potent than a poetess
With any extreme Republican. Ah,
ah.
You smile at last, then.” “Thank you.” “Leave the smile.
I'll lose the thanks for't, ay, and
throw you in
My transatlantic girl, with golden
eyes,
That draw you to her splendid white-
ness as
The pistol of a water-lily draws,
Adust with gold. Those girls across
the sea
Are tyrannously pretty, and I swore
(She seemed to me an innocent frank
girl)
To bring her to you for a woman's
kiss;
Not now, but on some other day or
week:
— We'll call it perjury; I give her up.”

“No, bring her.” “Now,” said he, “you make it hard
To touch such goodness with a grimy
palm.
I thought to tease you well, and fret
you cross,
And steel myself, when rightly vexed
with you,
For telling you a thing to tease you
more.”

“Of Romney?” “No, no: nothing worse,” he cried,
“Or Romney Leigh than what is
buzzed about,—
That *he* is taken in an eye-trap too,
Like many half as wise. The thing,
I mean
Refers to you, not him.” “Refers to me.”

He echoed,— “Me! You sound it
like a stone
Dropped down a dry well very list-
lessly
By one who never thinks about the
toad
Alive at the bottom. Presently per-
haps
You'll sound your ‘me’ more proud-
ly— till I shrink.”

"Lord Howe's the toad, then, in this question?"

"Brief,

We'll take it graver. Give me sofa-room,
And quiet hearing. You know Eglington,—
John Eglinton of Eglinton in Kent?"

"Is he the toad? He's rather like
the snail,
Known chiefly for the house upon his back:
Divide the man and house, you kill
the man:
That's Eglinton of Eglinton, Lord Howe."

He answered grave: "A reputable man,
An excellent landlord of the olden stamp
If somewhat slack in new philanthropies,
Who keeps his birthdays with a tenants' dance,
Is hard upon them when they miss the church
Or hold their children back from catechism,
But not ungentle when the aged poor
Pick sticks at hedgesides: nay, I've heard him say,
'The old dame has a twinge because
she stoops:
That's punishment enough for felony.'

"O tender-hearted landlord! may I take
My long lease with him, when the time arrives
For gathering winter-fagots!"

"He likes art;
Buys books and pictures . . . of a certain kind;
Neglects no patent duty; a good son" . . .

"To a most obedient mother. Born
to wear
His father's shoes, he wears her husband's too:
Indeed I've heard it's touching.
Dear Lord Howe,
You shall not praise me so against your heart
When I'm at worst for praise and fagots."

"Be
Less bitter with me; for . . . in short,"
he said,

"I have a letter, which he urged me
so
To bring you . . . I could scarcely choose but yield;
Insisting that a new love, passing through

The hand of an old friendship, caught
from it

Some reconciling odor."

"Love, you say?
My lord, I cannot love: I only find
The rhyme for love; and that's not
love, my lord.
Take back your letter."

"Pause. You'll read it first?"

"I will not read it: it is stereotyped,
The same he wrote to,—anybody's name,
Anne Blythe the actress, when she
died so true

A duchess fainted in a private box;
Pauline the dancer, after the great
pas

In which her little feet winked over-head

Like other fireflies, and amazed the pit;

Or Baldinacci, when her F in alt
Had touched the silver tops of heaven itself

With such a pungent spirit-dart, the Queen

Laid softly, each to each, her white-gloved palms,

And sighed for joy; or else (I thank your friend)

Aurora Leigh, when some indifferent rhymes,

Like those the boys sang round the holy ox

On Memphis-highway, chance perhaps to set

Our Apis-public lowing. Oh, he wants,

Instead of any worthy wife at home,
A star upon his stage of Eglinton?

Advise him that he is not overshrewd

In being so little modest: a dropped star

Makes bitter waters, says a Book I've read,—

And there's his unread letter."

"My dear friend,"

Lord Howe began . . .

To keep them at the grand millennial height,
He has to mount a stool to get at them,
And meantime lives on quite the common way,
With everybody's morals.

As we passed,
Lord Howe insisting that his friendly arm
Should oar me across the sparkling, brawling stream
Which swept from room to room, we fell at once
On Lady Waldemar. "Miss Leigh," she said,
And gave me such a smile,—so cold and bright,
As if she tried it in a 'tiring glass
And liked it,—"all to-night I've strained at you
As babes at bawbles held up out of reach
By spiteful nurses, ('Never snatch,' they say.)
And there you sate, most perfectly shut in
By good Sir Blaise and clever Mister Smith,
And then our dear Lord Howe! At last indeed
I almost snatched. I have a world to speak
About your cousin's place in Shropshire where
I've been to see his work . . . our work,—you heard
I went? . . . and of a letter yesterday,
In which if I should read a page or two
You might feel interest, though you're looked of course
In literary toil.—You'll like to hear
Your last book lies at the phalanstery,
As judged innocuous for the elder girls
And younger women who still care for books.
We all must read, you see, before we live,
Till slowly the ineffable light comes up
And as it deepens drowns the written word:
So said your cousin, while we stood and felt

A sunset from his favorite beech-tree seat.
He might have been a poet if he would;
But then he saw the higher thing at once
And climbed to it. I think he looks well now,
Has quite got over that unfortunate . . .
Ah, ah . . . I know it moved you. Tender-heart!
You took a liking to the wretched girl.
Perhaps you thought the marriage suitable,
Who knows? A poet hankers for romance,
And so on. As for Romney Leigh, 'tis sure
He never loved her,—never. By the way,
You have not heard of *her* . . . ? Quite out of sight,
And out of saving? Lost in every sense?"
She might have gone on talking half an hour
And I stood still, and cold, and pale, I think,
As a garden-statue a child pelts with snow
For pretty pastime. Every now and then
I put in "yes" or "no," I scarce knew why:
The blind man walks wherever the dog pulls,
And so I answered. Till Lord Howe broke in:
"What penance takes the wretch who interrupts
The talk of charming women? I at last
Must brave it. Pardon, Lady Waldemar!
The lady on my arm is tired, unwell,
And loyally I've promised she shall say
No harder word this evening than . . .
good-night:
The rest her face speaks for her."—
Then we went.
And I breathe large at home. I drop my cloak,
Unclasp my girdle, loose the band that ties

My hair . . . now could I but unloose
my soul!
We are sepulchred alive in this close
world,
And want more room.

The charming woman there—
This reckoning up and writing down
her talk
Affects me singularly. How she
talked
To pain me! woman's spite. You
wear steel mail;
A woman takes a housewife from her
breast,
And plucks the delicatest needle out
As 'twere a rose, and pricks you care-
fully
'Neath nails, 'neath eyelids, in your
nostrils, say:
A beast would roar so tortured; but
a man,
A human creature, must not, shall
not, flinch,
No, not for shame.

What vexes, after all,
Is just that such as she, with such
as I,
Knows how to vex. Sweet Heaven!
she takes me up
As if she had fingered me, and dog-
eared me,
And spelled me by the fireside half
a life.
She knows my turns, my feeble
points. What then?
The knowledge of a thing implies the
thing;
Of course, she 'ound *that* in me, she
saw that,
Her pencil underscored *this* for a
fault,
And I, still ignorant. Shut the book
up—close!
And crush that beetle 'n the leaves.
O heart!
At last we shall grow hard too, like
the rest.
And call it self-defence because we
are soft.

And after all, now . . . why should
I be pained
That Romney Leigh, my cousin,
should espouse
This Lady Waldemar? And, say
she held
Her newly blossomed gladness in my
face, . . .
'Twas natural surely, if not generous,

Considering how, when winter held
her fast,
I helped the frost with mine, and
pained her more
Than she pains me. Pains me!—
But wherefore pained?
'Tis clear my cousin Romney wants
a wife.
So, good! The man's need of the
woman, here,
Is greater than the woman's of the
man,
And easier serv'd; for where the man
discerns
A sex (ah, ah, the man can general-
ize),
Said he, we see but one ideally
And really; where we yearn to lose
ourselves,
And melt like white pearls, in an-
other's wine,
He seeks to double himself by what
he loves,
And makes his drink more costly by
our pearls.
At board, at bed, at work and holi-
day,
It is not good for man to be alone;
And that's his way of thinking, first
and last,
And thus my cousin Romney wants
a wife.

But then my cousin sets his dignity
On personal virtue. If he under-
stands
By love, like others, self-aggrandize-
ment,
It is that he may verily be great
By doing rightly and kindly. Once
he thought,
For charitable ends set duly forth
In heaven's white judgment-book, to
marry . . . ah,
We'll call her name Aurora Leigh,
although
She's changed since then!—and
once, for social ends,
Poor Marian Erle, my sister Marian
Erle,
My woodland sister, sweet maid Mar-
ian,
Whose memory moans on in me like
the wind
Through ill-shut casements, making
me more sad
Than ever I find reasons for. Alas,
Poor pretty plaintive face, embodied
ghost!

He finds it easy, then, to clap thee off
From pulling at his sleeve and book
and pen,
He locks thee out at night into the
cold,
Away from butting with thy horny
eyes
Against his crystal dreams, that now
he's strong.

To love anew? that Lady Waldemar
Succeeds my Marian?

After all, why not?
He loved not Marian more than once
he loved
Aurora. If he loves at last that
third,
Albeit she prove as slippery as spilt
oil
On marble floors, I will not augur
him
Ill luck for that. Good love, how'er
ill placed,
Is better for a man's soul in the end
Than if he loved ill what deserves
love well.

A Pagan kissing for a step of Pan
The wild-goat's hoof-print on the
loamy down,
Exceeds our modern thinker who
turns back
The strata . . . granite, limestone,
coal, and clay,
Concluding coldly with, "Here's
law! where's God?"

And then at worse,—if Romney loves
her not,—
At worst,—if he's incapable of love,
(Which may be),—then, indeed, for
such a man
Incapable of love, she's good enough;
For she, at worst too, is a woman still,
And loves him . . . as the sort of
woman can.

My loose long hair began to burn and
creep,
Alive to the very ends, about my
knees:
I swept it backward, as the wind
sweeps flame,
With the passion of my hands. Ah,
Romney laughed
One day . . . (how full the memories
come up!)
— "Your Florence fireflies live on in
your hair."

He said, "it gleams so." Well, I
wrung them out,

My fireflies; made a knot as hard as
life
Of those loose, soft, impracticable
curls,
And then sat down and thought . . .
"She shall not think
Her thought of me," — and drew my
desk, and wrote.

"Dear Lady Waldemar, I could not
speak
With people round me, nor can sleep
to-night,
And not speak, after the great news
I heard
Of you and of my cousin. May you be
Most happy, and the good he meant
the world
Replenish his own life! Say what I
say,
And let my word be sweeter for your
mouth,
As you are *you* . . . I only Aurora
Leigh."

That's quiet, guarded: though she
hold it up
Against the light, she'll not see
through it more
Than lies there to be seen. So much
for pride;
And now for peace a little. Let me
stop
All writing back . . . "Sweet thanks,
my sweetest friend,
You've made more joyful my great
joy itself."
— No, that's too simple: she would
twist it thus,
"My joy would still be as sweet as
thyme in drawers,
However shut up in the dark and
dry;
But violets aired and dewed by love
like yours
Outsmell all thyme: we keep that in
our clothes,
But drop the other down our bosoms
till
They smell like" . . . Ah! I see her
writing back
Just so. She'll make a nosegay of
her words,
And tie it with blue ribbons at the
end,
To suit a poet. Pshaw!
And then we'll have
The call to church; the broken, sad,
bad dream

Dreamed out at last ; the marriage-vow complete
With the marriage-breakfast ; praying
in white gloves,
Drawn off in haste for drinking pagan
toasts

In somewhat stronger wine than any
sipped
By gods since Bacchus had his way
with grapes.

A postscript stops all that and rescues
me.

" You need not write. I have been
overworked,

And think of leaving London, Eng-
land even,
And hastening to get nearer to the sun,
Where men sleep better. So, adieu ! "

I fold

And seal ; and now I'm out of all
the coil :

I breathe now, I spring upward like a
branch

The ten-years' schoolboy with a
crooked stick

May pull down to his level in search
of nuts,

But cannot hold a moment. How we
twang

Back on the blue sky, and assert our
height,

While he stares after ! Now, the won-
der seems

That I could wrong myself by such a
doubt.

We poets always have uneasy hearts,
Because our hearts, large-rounded as
the globe,

Can turn but one side to the sun at
once.

We are used to dip our artist hands in
gall

And potash, trying potentialities
Of alternated color, till at last

We get confused, and wonder for our
skin

How nature tinged it first. Well,
here's the true

Good flesh-color : I recognize my
hand,
Which Romney Leigh may clasp as
just a friend's,

And keep his clean.

And now, my Italy.
Alas ! if we could ride with naked
souls,

And make no noise, and pay no price
at all,

I would have seen thee sooner, Italy ;
For still I have heard thee crying
through my life,
Thou piercing silence of ecstatic
graves.
Men call that name.

But even a witch to-day
Must melt down golden pieces in the
nard,
Wherewith to anoint her broomstick
ere she rides ;
And poets evermore are scant of gold,
And if they find a piece behind the
door,
It turns by sunset to a withered leaf.
The Devil himself scarce trusts his
patented
Gold-making art to any who make
rhymes,
But calls his Faustus from philoso-
phers,
And not from poets. "Leave my
Job," said God ;
And so the Devil leaves him without
pence,
And poverty proves plainly special
grace.
In these new, just, administrative
times
Men clamor for an order of merit :
why ?
Here's black bread on the table, and
no wine !

At least I am a poet in being poor,
Thank God ! I wonder if the manu-
script
Of my long poem, if 'twere sold out-
right,
Would fetch enough to buy me shoes
to go

Afoot (thrown in, the necessary
patch
For the other side the Alps) ? It can-
not be.

I fear that I must sell this residue
Of my father's books, although the
Elzevirs
Have fly-leaves over-written by his
hand
In faded notes as thick and fine and
brown
As cobwebs on a tawny monument
Of the old Greeks — *conferenda hac
cum his —*
Corrupte citat — lege potius,
And so on, in the scholar's regal
way

Of giving judgment on the parts of speech,
As if he sat on all twelve thrones up-piled,
Arraigning Israel. Ay, but books and notes
Must go together. And this Proclus too,
In these dear quaint contracted Grecian types,
Fantastically crumpled, like his thoughts,
Which would not seem too plain ; you go round twice
For one step forward, then you take it back,
Because you're somewhat giddy ; there's the rule
For Proclus. Ah, I stained this middle leaf
With pressing in't my Florence iris-bell,
Long stalk and all. My father chided me
For that stain of blue blood. I recollect
The peevish turn his voice took, — “Silly girls !
Who plant their flowers in our philosophy
To make it fine, and only spoil the book.
No more of it, Aurora.” Yes — no more.
Ah, blame of love, that's sweeter than all praise
Of those who love not ! 'Tis so lost to me,
I cannot, in such beggared life, afford
To lose my Proclus — not for Florence even.

The kissing Judas, Wolff, shall go instead,
Who builds us such a royal book as this
To honor a chief poet, folio-built,
And writes above, “The house of Nobody !”
Who floats in cream as rich as any sucked
From Juno's breasts, the broad Homeric lines,
And while with their spondaic prodigious mouths
They lap the lucent margins as babe-gods,
Proclaims them bastards. Wolff's an atheist ;

And if the Iliad fell out, as he says,
By mere fortuitous concourse of old songs,
Conclude as much, too, for the universe.

That Wolff, those Platos : sweep the upper shelves
As clean as this, and so I am almost rich,
Which means, not forced to think of being poor
In sight of ends. To-morrow : no delay.
I'll wait in Paris till good Carrington Dispose of such, and, having chaffered for
My book's price with the publisher, direct
All proceeds to me. Just a line to ask His help.
And now I come, my Italy, My own hills ! Are you 'ware of me, my hills, — How I burn toward you ? do you feel to-night
The urgency and yearning of my soul, As sleeping mothers feel the sucking babe,
And smile ? Nay, not so much as when in heat
Vain lightnings catch at your inviolate tops
And tremble, while ye are steadfast. Still ye go
Your own determined, calm, indifferent way
Toward sunrise, shade by shade, and light by light,
Of all the grand progression nought left out,
As if God verily made you for yourselves,
And would not interrupt your life with ours.

SIXTH BOOK.

THE English have a scornful insular way
Of calling the French light. The levity
Is in the judgment only, which yet stands;

For, say a foolish thing but oft enough
(And here's the secret of a hundred
creeds,
Men get opinions as boys learn to
spell,
By re-iteration chiefly), the same
thing
Shall pass at last for absolutely wise,
And not with fools exclusively. And
so
We say the French are light, as if we
said
The cat mews, or the milch-cow gives
us milk:
Say, rather, cats are milked, and
milch-cows mew;
For what is lightness but inconse-
quence,
Vague fluctuation 'twixt effect and
cause,
Compelled by neither? Is a bullet
light,
That dashes from the gun-mouth,
while the eye
Winks and the heart beats one, to
flatten itself
To a wafer on the white speck on a
wall
A hundred paces off? Even so di-
rect,
So sternly undivertible of aim,
Is this French people.

All idealists
Too absolute and earnest, with them
all
The idea of a knife cuts real flesh;
And still, devouring the safe inter-
val
Which nature placed between the
thought and act
With those too fliry and impatient
souls,
They threaten conflagration to the
world,
And rush with most unscrupulous
logic on
Impossible practice. Set your orators
To blow upon them with loud windy
mouths
Through watchword phrases, jest or
sentiment,
Which drive our burly brutal English
mobs,
Like so much chaff, whichever way
they blow,—
This light French people will not thus
be driven.
They turn indeed; but then they
turn upon

Some central pivot of their thought
and choice,
And veer out by the force of holding
fast.
That's hard to understand, for Eng-
lishmen
Unused to abstract questions, and un-
trained
To trace the involutions, valve by
valve,
In each orb'd bulb-root of a general
truth,
And mark what subtly fine integu-
ment
Divides opposed compartments. Free-
dom's self
Comes concrete to us, to be under-
stood,
Fixed in a feudal form incarnately
To suit our ways of thought and rev-
erence;
The special form, with us, being still
the thing.
With us, I say, though I'm of Italy
By mother's birth and grave, by
father's grave
And inanity, let it be,—a poet's
heart
Can swell to a pair of nationalities,
However ill lodged in a woman's
breast.

And so I am strong to love this noble
France,
This poet of the nations, who dreams on
And wails on (while the household
goes to wreck)
Forever, after some ideal good,
Some equal poise of sex, some un-
vowed love
Inviolate, some spontaneous brother-
hood,
Some wealth that leaves none poor
and finds none tired,
Some freedom of the many that re-
spects
The wisdom of the few. Heroic
dreams!
Sublime to dream so; natural to
wake;
And sad to use such lofty scaffold-
ings,
Erected for the building of a church,
To build, instead, a brothel or a pris-
on.
May God save France!
And if at last she sighs
Her great soul up into a great man's
face,

To flush his temples out so gloriously
That few dare carp at Cæsar for being
bald,
What then? This Cæsar represents,
not reigns,
And is no despot, though twice absolute;
This head has all the people for a
heart;
This purple's lined with the democ-
racy,—
Now let him see to it! for a rent
within
Would leave irreparable rags without.

A serious riddle: find such anywhere
Except in France, and, when 'tis
found in France,
Be sure to read it rightly. So, I
mused
Up and down, up and down, the ter-
raced streets,
The glittering boulevards, the white
colonnades,
Of fair fantastic Paris who wears
trees
Like plumes, as if man made them,
spire and tower
As if they had grown by nature, toss-
ing up
Her fountains in the sunshine of the
squares,
As if in beauty's game she tossed the
dice,
Or blew the silver down-balls of her
dreams
To sow futurity with seeds of thought,
And count the passage of her festive
hours.

The city swims in verdure, beautiful
As Venice on the waters,—the sea-
swan.
What bosky gardens dropped in close-
walled courts,
Like plums in ladies' laps who start
and laugh!
What miles of streets that run on
after trees,
Still carrying all the necessary shops,
Those open caskets with the jewels
seen!
And trade is art, and art's philoso-
phy,
In Paris. There's a silk, for instance,
there,
As worth an artist's study for the
folds,

As that bronze opposite! nay, the
bronze has faults;
Art's here too artful,—conscious as a
maid
Who leans to mark her shadow on
the wall
Until she lose a 'vantage in her step.
Yet art walks forward, and knows
where to walk:
The artists also are idealists,
Too absolute for nature, logical
To austerity in the application of
The special theory; not a soul con-
tent
To paint a crooked pollard and an
ass,
As the English will, because they find
it so,
And like it somehow.—There the old
Tuilleries
Is pulling its high cap down on its
eyes,
Conounded, conscience-stricken, and
amazed
By the apparition of a new fair face
In those devouring mirrors. Through
the grate
Within the gardens, what a heap of
babes,
Swept up like leaves beneath the
chestnut-trees
From every street and alley of the
town,
By ghosts, perhaps, that blow too
bleat this way
A-looking for their heads! dear pretty
babes,
I wish them luck to have their ball-
play out
Before the next change. Here the air
is thronged
With statues poised upon their col-
umns fine,
As if to stand a moment were a feat,
Against that blue! What squares!
what breathing-room
For a nation that runs fast, ay, runs
against
The dentist's teeth at the corner in
pale rows,
Which grin at progress, in an epi-
gram!
I walked the day out, listening to the
chink
Of the first Napoleon's bones in his
second grave,
By victories guarded 'neath the gold-
en dome

That caps all Paris like a bubble.
 "Shall
 These dry bones live," thought Louis
 Philippe once,
 And lived to know. Herein is argu-
 ment
 For kings and politicians, but still
 more
 For poets, who bear buckets to the
 well
 Of ampler draught.

These crowds are very good
 For meditation (when we are very
 strong,)
 Though love of beauty makes us tim-
 orous,
 And draws us backward from the
 coarse town-sights
 To count the daisies upon dappled
 fields,
 And hear the streams bleat on among
 the hills
 In innocent and indolent repose;
 While still with silken elegiac thoughts
 We wind out from us the distracting
 world,
 And die into the chrysalis of a man,
 And leave the best that may, to come
 of us,
 In some brown moth. I would be
 bold, and bear,
 To look into the swarniest face of
 things,
 For God's sake who has made them.
 Six days' work;
 The last day shutting 'twixt its dawn
 and eve
 The whole work bettered of the pre-
 vious five!
 Since God collected and resumed in
 man
 The firmaments, the strata, and the
 lights,
 Fish, fowl, and beast, and insect,—
 all their trains
 Of various life caught back upon his
 arm,
 Re-organized, and constituted MAN,
 The microcosm, the adding-up of
 works;
 Within whose fluttering nostrils, then,
 at last
 Consuminating himself the Maker
 sighed,
 As some strong winner at the foot-
 race sighs
 Touching the goal.

Humanity is great;
 And if I would not rather pore upon

An ounce of common, ugly, human
 dust,
 An artisan's palm or a peasant's brow,
 Unsmooth, ignoble, save to me and
 God,
 Than track old Nilus to his silver
 roots,
 Or wait on all the changes of the
 moon
 Among the mountain-peaks of Thes-
 saly
 (Until her magic crystal round itself
 For many a witch to see in)—set it
 down
 As weakness, strength by no means.
 How is this,
 That men of science, osteologists
 And surgeons, beat some poets in
 respect
 For nature?—count nought common
 or unclean,
 Spend raptures upon perfect speci-
 mens
 Of indurated veins, distorted joints,
 Or beautiful new cases of curved
 spine,
 While we, we are shocked at nature's
 falling off,
 We dare to shrink back from her
 warts and blains,
 We will not, when she sneezes, look
 at her,
 Not even to say, "God bless her!"
 That's our wrong:
 For that, she will not trust us often
 with
 Her larger sense of beauty and de-
 sire,
 But tethers us to a lily or a rose,
 And bids us diet on the dew in-
 side,
 Left ignorant that the hungry beggar-
 boy
 (Who stares unseen against our ab-
 sent eyes,
 And wonders at the gods that we
 must be,
 To pass so careless for the oranges!)
 Bears yet a breastful of a fellow-
 world
 To this world, undisparaged, unde-
 spoiled,
 And (while we scorn him for a flower
 or two,
 As being, Heaven help us, less poeti-
 cal)
 Contains himself both flowers and
 firmaments
 And surging seas and aspectable stars,

And all that we would push him out
of sight
In order to see nearer. Let us pray
God's grace to keep God's image in
repute,
That so the poet and philanthropist
(Even I and Romney) may stand side
by side,
Because we both stand face to face
with men,
Contemplating the people in the
rough,
Yet each so follow a vocation, his
And mine.
I walked on, musing with myself
On life and art, and whether after
all
A larger metaphysics might not help
Our physics, a completer poetry
Adjust our daily life and vulgar wants
More fully than the special outside
plans,
Phalansteries, material institutes,
The civil conscriptions, and lay mon-
asteries
Preferred by modern thinkers, as
they thought
The bread of man indeed made all
his life,
And washing seven times in the
“People's Baths”
Were sovereign for a people's lepro-
sy,
Still leaving out the essential proph-
et's word
That comes in power. On which we
thunder down,
We prophets, poets, — Virtue's in the
word!
The maker burnt the darkness up
with his,
To inaugurate the use of vocal life;
And plant a poet's word even deep
enough
In any man's breast, looking pres-
ently
For offshoots, you have done more
for the man
Than if you dressed him in a broad-
cloth coat,
And warmed his Sunday pottage at
your fire.
Yet Romney leaves me . . .

God! what face is that?
O Romney, O Marian!

Walking on the quays,
And pulling thoughts to pieces leis-
urely,
As if I caught at grasses in a field,

And bit them slow between my ab-
sent lips,
And shred them with my hands . . .
What face is that?
What a face, what a look, what a
likeness! Full on mine
The sudden blow of it came down,
till all
My blood swam, my eyes dazzled,
then I sprang . . .
It was as if a meditative man
Were dreaming out a summer after-
noon,
And watching gnats a-prick upon a
pond,
When something floats up suddenly,
out there,
Turns over . . . a dead face, known
once alive . . .
So old, so new! it would be dreadful
now
To lose the sight, and keep the doubt
of this:
He plunges — ha! he has lost it in
the splash.
I plunged — I tore the crowd up,
either side,
And rushed on, forward, forward,
after her.
Her? whom?
A woman sauntered slow in front,
Munching an apple; she left off
amazed
As if I had snatched it: that's not
she, at least.
A man walked arm-linked with a
lady veiled,
Both heads dropped closer than the
need of talk;
They started; he forgot her with his
face,
And she, herself, and clung to him as
if
My look were fatal. Such a stream
of folk,
And all with cares and business of
their own!
I ran the whole quay down against
their eyes —
No Marian; nowhere Marian. Al-
most, now,
I could call “Marian, Marian!” with
the shriek
Of desperate creatures calling for the
dead.
Where is she, was she? was she any-
where?

I stood still, breathless, gazing, straining out
 In every uncertain distance, till at last
 A gentleman abstracted as myself
 Came full against me, then resolved the clash
 In voluble excuses, — obviously
 Some learned member of the Institute
 Upon his way there, walking, for his health,
 While meditating on the last "Discourse;"
 Pinching the empty air 'twixt finger and thumb,
 From which the snuff being ousted by that shock
 Defiled his snow-white waistcoat duly pricked
 At the button-hole with honorable red;
 "Madame, your pardon," — there he swerved from me
 A metre, as confounded as he had heard
 That Dumas would be chosen to fill up
 The next chair vacant, by his "men in us."
 Since when was genius found respectable?
 It passes in its place, indeed, which means
 The seventh floor back, or else the hospital.
 Revolving pistols are ingenious things;
 But prudent men (academicians are) scarce keep them in the cupboard next the prunes.
 And so, abandoned to a bitter mirth, I loitered to my inn. O world, O world,
 O jurists, rhymers, dreamers, what you please,
 We play a weary game of hide-and-seek!
 We shape a figure of our fantasy, Call nothing something, and run after it
 And lose it, lose ourselves, too, in the search,
 Till clash against us comes a somebody
 Who also has lost something and is lost,—
 Philosopher against philanthropist, Academician against poet, man

Against woman, against the living the dead —
 Then home, with a bad headache and worse jest.
 To change the water for my heliotropes
 And yellow roses. Paris has such flowers,
 But England also. 'Twas a yellow rose,
 By that south window of the little house,
 My cousin Romney gathered with his hand
 On all my birthdays for me, save the last;
 And then I shook the tree too rough, too rough,
 For roses to stay after. Now, my maps.
 I must not linger here from Italy
 Till the last nightingale is tired of song,
 And the last firefly dies off in the maize.
 My soul's in haste to leap into the sun,
 And scorch and seethe itself to a finer mood,
 Which here in this chill north is apt to stand
 Too stiffly in former moulds. That face persists.
 It floats up, it turns over in my mind
 As like to Marian as one dead is like
 The same alive. In very deed a face,
 And not a fancy, though it vanished so:
 The small fair face between the darks of hair
 I used to liken, when I saw her first,
 To a point of moonlit water down a well;
 The low brow, the frank space between the eyes,
 Which always had the brown pathetic look
 Of a dumb creature, who had been beaten once,
 And never since was easy with the world.
 Ah, ah! now I remember perfectly Those eyes to-day: how overlarge they seemed!
 As if some patient passionate despair
 (Like a coal dropt and forgot on tapestry,

Which slowly burns a widening circle
out)
Had burnt them larger, larger. And
those eyes,
To-day, I do remember, saw me too,
As I saw them, with conscious lids
astrain
In recognition. Now, a fantasy,
A simple shade or image of the brain,
Is merely passive, does not retroact,
Is seen, but sees not.
"Twas a real face,
Perhaps a real Marian.
Which being so,
I ought to write to Romney, "Marian's here :
Be comforted for Marian."
My pen fell ;
My hands struck sharp together, as
hands do
Which hold at nothing. Can I write
to him
A half-truth? can I keep my own
soul blind
To the other half . . . the worse?
What are our souls,
If still, to run on straight a sober
pace,
Nor start at every pebble or dead
leaf,
They must wear blinkers, ignore facts,
suppress
Six-tenths of the road? Confront the
truth, my soul!
And, oh! as truly as that was Marian's face,
The arms of that same Marian clasped
a thing
. . . Not hid so well beneath the
scanty shawl,
I cannot name it now for what it was.
A child. Small business has a cast-
away
Like Marian, with that crown of pros-
perous wives,
At which the gentlest she grows ar-
rogant,
And says, "My child." Who finds
an emerald ring
On a beggar's middle finger, and re-
quires
More testimony to convict a thief?
A child's too costly for so mere a
wretch:
She filched it somewhere; and it
means with her,
Instead of honor, blessing, merely
shame.

I cannot write to Romney, "Here
she is,
Here's Marian found ! I'll set you on
her track.
I saw her here in Paris, . . . and her
child.
She put away your love two years
ago,
But, plainly, not to starve. You suf-
fered then;
And now that you've forgot her ut-
terly,
As any last year's annual, in whose
place
You've planted a thick flowering
evergreen,
I choose, being kind, to write and
tell you this
To make you wholly easy,—she's not
dead,
But only . . . damned."

Stop there: I go too fast;
I'm cruel, like the rest,—in haste to
take
The first stir in the arras for a rat,
And set my barking, biting thoughts
upon't.
—A child! what then? Suppose a
neighbor's sick,
And asked her, "Marian, carry out
my child
In this spring air,"—I punish her
for that?
Or say, the child should hold her
round the neck
For good child reasons, that he liked
it so,
And would not leave her,—she had
winning ways,—
I brand her, therefore, that she took
the child?

Not so.

I will not write to Romney Leigh,
For now he's happy, and she may,
indeed,
Be guilty, and the knowledge of her
fault
Would draggle his smooth time. But
I, whose days
Are not so fine they cannot bear the
rain,
And who, moreover, having seen her
face,
Must see it again . . . will see it, by
my hopes
Of one day seeing heaven too. The
police
Shall track her, hound her, ferret
their own soil:

We'll dig this Paris to its catacombs
But certainly we'll find her, have her
out,
And save her, if she will or will not,
child
Or no child,—if a child, then one to
save!

The long weeks passed on without
consequence.
As easy find a footprint on the sand
The morning after spring-tide, as the
trace
Of Marian's feet between the incess-
ant surfs
Of this live flood. She may have
moved this way;
But so the star-fish does, and crosses
out
The dent of her small shoe. The
foiled police
Renounced me. "Could they find a
girl and child,
No other signalment but girl and
child?
No data shown but noticeable eyes,
And hair in masses, low upon the brow,
As if it were an iron crown, and
pressed?
Friends heighten, and suppose they
specify:
Why, girls with hair and eyes are
everywhere
In Paris; they had turned me up in
vain,
No Marian Erle indeed, but certainly
Mathildes, Justines, Victoires . . .
or, if I sought
The English, Betsies, Saras, by the
score.
They might as well go out into the
fields
To find a speckled bean that's some-
how specked,
And somewhere in the pod." They
left me so.
Shall I leave Marian? have I dreamed
a dream?

—I thank God I have found her! I
must say
"Thank God!" for finding her, al-
though 'tis true
I find the world more sad and wicked
.for't.
But she—
I'll write about her presently.
My hand's a-tremble, as I had just
caught up

My heart to write with in the place of
it.
At least you'd take these letters to be
writ
At sea, in storm! — wait now . . .
A simple chance
Did all. I could not sleep last night,
and, tired
Of turning on my pillow and harder
thoughts,
Went out at early morning, when the
air
Is delicate with some last starry
touch,
To wander through the market-place
of flowers
(The prettiest haunt in Paris), and
make sure
At worst that there were roses in the
world.
So wandering, musing, with the art-
ist's eye,
That keeps the shade-side of the
thing it loves,
Half-absent, whole observing, while
the crowd
Of young vivacious and black-braided
heads
Dipped, quick as finches in a blos-
omed tree,
Among the nosegays, cheapening this
and that
In such a cheerful twitter of rapid
speech,—
My heart leapt in me, startled by a
voice
That slowly, faintly, with long
breaths that marked
The interval between the wish and
word,
Inquired in stranger's French,
"Would *that* be much,
That branch of flowering mountain-
gorse?" — "So much?
Too much for me, then!" turning
the face round
So close upon me that I felt the sigh
It turned with.
"Marian, Marian!" — face to face —
"Marian! I find you. Shall I let you
go?"
I held her two slight wrists with both
my hands;
"Ah, Marian, Marian, can I let you
go?"
She fluttered from me like a cycla-
men
As white, which, taken in a sudden
wind,

Beats on against the palisade. "Let pass,"
She said at last. "I will not," I replied:
"I lost my sister Marian many days,
And sought her ever in my walks
and prayers,
And now I find her . . . do we throw
away
The bread we worked and prayed for,
—crumble it
And drop it . . . to do even so by
thee
Whom still I've hummered after more
than bread,
My sister Marian? Can I hurt thee,
dear?
Then why distrust me? Never tremble
so.
Come with me rather, where we'll
talk and live,
And none shall vex us. I've a home
for you
And me, and no one else" . . .
She shook her head.
"A home for you and me and no one
else
Ill suits one of us: I prefer to such
A roof of grass on which a flower
might spring,
Less costly to me than the cheapest
here;
And yet I could not at this hour af-
ford
A like home even. That you offer
yours,
I thank you. You are good as heav-
en itself—
As good as one I knew before . . .
Farewell!"

I loosed her hands. "In his name
no farewell!"
(She stood as if I held her.) "For
his sake,
For his sake,—Romney's! by the
good he meant,
Ay, always! by the love he pressed
for once,
And by the grief, reproach, abandon-
ment,
He took in charge" . . .
"He, Romney! who grieved him?
Who had the heart for't? what re-
proach touched him?
Be merciful—speak quickly."

"Therefore come,"
I answered with authority. "I
think

We dare to speak such things, and
name such names,
In the open squares of Paris."
Not a word
She said, but in a gentle, humbled way
(As one who had forgot herself in
grief)
Turned round, and followed closely
where I went,
As if I led her by a narrow plank
Across devouring waters, step by
step;
And so in silence we walked on a
mile.

And then she stopped: her face was
white as wax.
"We go much farther?"
"You are ill," I asked,
"Or tired?"
She looked the whiter for her smile.
"There's one at home," she said,
"has need of me
By this time; and I must not let him
wait."

"Not even," I asked, "to hear of
Romney Leigh?"

"Not even," she said, "to hear of
Mister Leigh."

"In that case," I resumed, "I go
with you,
And we can talk the same thing there
as here.
None waits for me: I have my day to
spend."

Her lips moved in a spasm without a
sound;
But then she spoke. "It shall be as
you please,
And better so—'tis shorter seen than
told;
And, though you will not find me
worth your pains,
That, even, may be worth some pains
to know
For one as good as you are." Then she led

The way; and I, as by a narrow
plank
Across devouring waters, followed
her,
Stepping by her footsteps, breathing
by her breath,
And holding her with eyes that would
not slip;

And so, without a word, we walked a mile,
And so another mile, without a word.

Until the peopled streets being all dismissed,
House rows and groups all scattered like a flock,
The market-gardens thickened, and the long
White walls beyond, like spiders' outside threads,
Stretched, feeling blindly toward the country-fields

Through half-built habitations and half-dug
Foundations,—intervals of trenchant chalk
That bit betwixt the grassy uneven turfs
Where goats (vine-tendrils trailing from their mouths)

Stood perched on edges of the cellarage

Which should be, staring as about to leap

To find their coming Bacchus. All the place
Seemed less a cultivation than a waste.

Men work here, only,—scarce begin to live:

All's sad, the country struggling with the town,

Like an untamed hawk upon a strong man's fist,

That beats its wings, and tries to get away,

And cannot choose be satisfied so soon

To hop through court-yards with its right foot tied,

The vintage plains and pastoral hills in sight.

We stopped beside a house too high and slim

To stand there by itself, but waiting till

Five others, two on this side, three on that,

Should grow up from the sullen second floor

They pause at now, to build it to a row.

The upper windows partly were unglazed

Meantime,—a meagre, unripe house:

a line

Of rigid poplars elbowed it behind;
And just in front, beyond the lime and bricks

That wronged the grass between it and the road,
A great acacia with its slender trunk,
And overpoise of multitudinous leaves,
(In which a hundred fields might spill their dew
And intense verdure, yet find room enough)

Stood reconciling all the place with green.

I followed up the stair upon her step.

She hurried upward, shot across a face,

A woman's, on the landing,—“How now, now!

Is no one to have holidays but you? You said an hour, and stay three hours, I think,

And Julie waiting for your betters here?

Why, if he had waked, he might have waked, for me.”

—Just murmuring an excusing word, she passed

And shut the rest out with the chamber-door,

Myself shut in beside her. ’Twas a room

Scarce larger than a grave, and near as bare,—

Two stools, a pallet-bed. I saw the room:

A mouse could find no sort of shelter in't,

Much less a greater secret; curtain-less,—

The window fixed you with its torturing eye,

Desyng you to take a step apart, If, peradventure, you would hide a thing.

I saw the whole room, I and Marian there

Alone.

Alone? She threw her bonnet off, Then, sighing as 'twere sighing the last time,

Approached the bed, and drew a shawl away;

You could not peel a fruit you fear to bruise

More calmly and more carefully than so,—

Nor would you find within, a rosier flushed Pomegranate —

There he lay upon his back,
The yearling creature, warm and moist with life
To the bottom of his dimples, — to the ends
Of the lovely tumbled curls about his face;
For since he had been covered over-much
To keep him from the light-glare, both his cheeks
Were hot and scarlet as the first live rose
The shepherd's heart-blood ebbed away into
The faster for his love. And love was here
As instant: in the pretty baby-mouth, shut close, as if for dreaming that it sucked;
The little naked feet, drawn up the way
Of nestled birdlings; every thing so soft
And tender, — to the tiny holdfast hands,
Which, closing on a finger into sleep, Had kept the mould o'f.

While we stood there dumb; For oh, that it should take such innocence To prove just guilt, I thought, and stood there dumb, — The light upon his eyelids pricked them wide, And staring out at us with all their blue, As half perplexed between the angel-hood He had been away to visit in his sleep, And our most mortal presence, gradually He saw his mother's face, accepting it In change for heaven itself with such a smile As might have well been learnt there, never moved, But smiled on in a drowse of ecstasy, So happy (half with her, and half with heaven) He could not have the trouble to be stirred, But smiled and lay there. Like a rose, I said ? As red and still indeed as any rose,

That blows in all the silence of its leaves, Content, in blowing, to fulfil its life.

She leaned above him (drinking him as wine) In that extremity of love 'twill pass For agony or rapture, seeing that love Includes the whole of nature, rounding it To love . . . no more, since more can never be Than just love. Self-forgot, cast out of self, And drowning in the transport of the sight, Her whole pale passionate face, mouth, forehead, eyes, One gaze she stood ; then, slowly as he smiled, She smiled too, slowly, smiling unaware, And drawing from his countenance to hers A fainter red, as if she watched a flame, And stood in it aglow. "How beautiful !" Said she. I answered, trying to be cold. (Must sin have compensations, was my thought, As if it were a holy thing like grief ? And is a woman to be fooled aside From putting vice down, with that woman's toy, A baby ?) — "Ay ! the child is well enough," I answered. "If his mother's palms are clean, They need be glad, of course, in clasping such ; But, if not, I would rather lay my hand, Were I she, on God's brazen altar-bars Red-hot with burning sacrificial lambs, Than touch the sacred curls of such a child." She plunged her fingers in his clustering locks As one who would not be afraid of fire ; And then, with indrawn steady utterance, said, "My lamb, my lamb ! although, through such as thou,

The most unclean got courage, and approached
To God, once, now they cannot, even with men,
Find grace enough for pity and gentle words."

"My Marian," I made answer, grave and sad,
"The priest who stole a lamb to offer him
Was still a thief. And if a woman steals
(Through God's own barrier-hedges of true love,
Which fence out license in securing love)
A child like this, that smiles so in her face,
She is no mother, but a kidnapper,
And he's a dismal orphan, not a son,
Whom all her kisses cannot feed so full

He will not miss hereafter a pure home
To live in, a pure heart to lean against,
A pure good mother's name and memory
To hope by when the world grows thick and bad,
And he feels out for virtue."

"Oh!" she smiled
With bitter patience, "the child takes his chance;
Not much worse off in being fatherless
Than I was, fathered. He will say, belike,
His mother was the saddest creature born;
He'll say his mother lived so contrary
To joy, that even the kindest, seeing her,
Grew sometimes almost cruel; he'll not say
She flew contrarious in the face of God
With bat-wings of her vices. Stole my child!
My flower of earth, my only flower on earth,
My sweet, my beauty!" . . . Up she snatched the child,
And, breaking on him in a storm of tears,
Drew out her long sobs from their shivering roots,
Until he took it for a game, and stretched

His feet, and flapped his eager arms like wings,
And crowded and gurgled through his infant laugh.
"Mine, mine!" she said. "I have as sure a right
As any glad proud mother in the world,
Who sets her darling down to cut his teeth
Upon her church-ring. If she talks of law,
I talk of law: I claim my mother-dues
By law, — the law which now is paramount;
The common law, by which the poor and weak
Are trodden under foot by vicious men,
And loathed forever after by the good.
Let pass! I did not filch: I found the child."

"You found him, Marian?"
 " Ay, I found him where I found my curse,—in the gutter with my shame!
What have you, any of you, to say to that,
Who all are happy, and sit safe and high,
And never spoke before to arraign my right
To grief itself? What, what, . . .
 being beaten down
By hoofs of maddened oxen into a ditch,
Half-dead, whole mangled, when a girl at last
Breathes, sees . . . and finds there, bedded in her flesh,
Because of the extremity of the shock,
Some coin of price! . . . and when a good man comes
(That's God! the best men are not quite as good)
And says, 'I dropped the coin there: take it, you,
And keep it, I shall pay you for the loss,'—
You all put up your finger—' See the thief!
Observe what precious thing she has come to filch!
How bad those girls are!' Oh, my flower, my pet,
I dare forget I have you in my arms,

And fly off to be angry with the world,
And fright you, hurt you with my tempers, till
You double up your lip? Why, that indeed
Is bad: a naughty mother!" "You mistake,"
I interrupted. "If I loved you not,
I should not, Marian, certainly be here."
"Alas!" she said, "you are so very good;
And yet I wish, indeed, you had never come
To make me sob until I vex the child.
It is not wholesome for these pleasure-plats
To be so early watered by our brine.
And then who knows? he may, not like me now
As well, perhaps, as ere he saw me fret:
One's ugly fretting. He has eyes the same
As angels, but he cannot see as deep;
And so I've kept forever in his sight
A sort of smile to please him, as you place
A green thing from the garden in a cup
To make believe it grows there. Look, my sweet,
My cowslip-ball! we've done with that cross face,
And here's the face come back you used to like.
Ah, ah! he laughs: he likes me. Ah!
Miss Leigh,
You're great and pure; but were you purer still,—
As if you had walked, we'll say no elsewhere
Than up and down the New Jerusalem,
And held your trailing lutestring up yourself
From brushing the twelve stones, for fear of some
Small speck as little as a needle-prick,
White stitched on white,—the child would keep to me,
Would choose his poor lost Marian, like me best,
And, though you stretched your arms, cry back and cling,

As we do when God says it's time to die
And bids us go up higher. Leave us, then:
We two are happy. Does he push me off?
He's satisfied with me, as I with him."
"So soft to one, so hard to others!
Nay," I cried, more angry that she melted me,
"We make henceforth a cushion of our faults
To sit and practise easy virtues on?
I thought a child was given to sanctify
A woman,—set her, in the sight of all
The clear-eyed heavens, a chosen minister
To do their business, and lead spirits up
The difficult blue heights. A woman lives
Not bettered, quickened toward the truth and good
Through being a mother? . . . Then she's none, although
She damps her baby's cheeks by kissing them."
As we kill roses."
"Kill! O Christ!" she said,
And turned her wild, sad face from side to side
With most despairing wonder in it.
"What,
What have you in your souls against me then,
All of you? Am I wicked, do you think?
God knows me, trusts me with the child—but you,
You think me really wicked?" "Complaisant,"
I answered softly, "to a wrong you've done,
Because of certain profits, which is wrong
Beyond the first wrong, Marian.
When you left
The pure place and the noble heart
to take
The hand of a seducer" . . .
"Whom? whose hand?
I took the hand of" . . .
Springing up erect,
And lifting up the child at full arm's length,

As if to bear him like an oriflamme
Unconquerable to armies of re-
proach,—
“ By ‘him,’ ” she said, “ my child’s
head and its curls,
By these blue eyes no woman born
could dare
A perjury on, I make my mother’s
oath,
That if I left that heart to lighten it,
The blood of mine was still, except
for grief !
No cleaner maid than I was took a
step
To a sadder end, — no matron-mother
now
Looks backward to her early maiden-
hood
Through chaster pulses. I speak
steadily;
And if I lie so . . . if, being fouled in
will
And paltered with in soul by devil’s
lust,
I dared to bid this angel take my
part . . .
Would God sit quiet, let us think, in
heaven,
Nor strike me dumb with thunder ?
Yet I speak:
He clears me therefore. What, ‘se-
duced’ ? ‘s your word ?
Do wolves seduce a wandering fawn
in France ?
Do eagles, who have pinched a lamb
with claws,
Seduce it into carrion ? So with me.
I was not ever, as you say, seduced,
But simply in ‘ordered.’ ”

There she paused, and sighed,
With such a sigh as drops from agony
To exhaustion, — sighing while she
let the babe
Slide down upon her bosom from her
arms,
And all her face’s light fell after
him
Like a torch quenched in falling.
Down she sank,
And sate upon the bedside with the
child.

But I, convicted, broken utterly,
With woman’s passion clung about
her waist,
And kissed her hair and eyes,— “ I
have been wrong,
Sweet Marian” . . . (weeping in a
tender rage),

“ Sweet, holy Marian ! And now,
Marian, now,
I’ll use your oath, although my lips
are hard,
And by the child, my Marian, by the
child,
I swear his mother shall be inno-
cent
Before my conscience, as in the open
Book
Of Him who reads for judgment. In-
nocent,
My sister ! Let the night be ne’er so
dark,
The moon is surely somewhere in the
sky.
So surely is your whiteness to be
found
Through all dark facts. But pardon,
pardon me,
And smile a little, Marian,— for the
child,
If not for me, my sister.”

The poor lip
Just motioned for the smile, and let it
go;
And then, with scarce a stirring of
the mouth,
As if a statue spoke that could not
breathe,
But spoke on calm between its marble
lips, —
“ I’m glad, I’m very glad, you clear
me so.
I should be sorry that you set me
down
With harlots, or with even a better
name
Which misbecomes his mother. For
the rest,
I am not on a level with your love,
Nor ever was, you know, but now
am worse,
Because that world of yours has dealt
with me
As when the hard sea bites and chews
a stone,
And changes the first form of it. I’ve
marked
A shore of pebbles bitten to one
shape
From all the various life of madre-
pores;
And so that little stone called Mar-
ian Erle,
Picked up and dropped by you and
another friend,
Was ground and tortured by the in-
cessant sea,

And bruised from what she was,—
changed! death's a change,
And she, I said, was murdered: Marian's dead.
What can you do with people when
they are dead,
But, if you are pious, sing a hymn
and go,
Or, if you are tender, heave a sigh and
go,
But go by all means, and permit
the grass
To keep its green fend up 'twixt them
and you?
Then leave me,—let me rest. I'm
dead, I say.
And if, to save the child from death
as well,
The mother in me has survived the
rest,
Why, that's God's miracle you must
not tax,
I'm not less dead for that: I'm nothing
more
But just a mother. Only for the
child
I'm warm, and cold, and hungry, and
afraid,
And smell the flowers a little, and see
the sun,
And speak still, and am silent,—just
for him!
I pray you therefore to mistake me
not,
And treat me haply as I were alive;
For, though you ran a pin into my
soul,
I think it would not hurt nor trouble
me.
Here's proof, dear lady,—in the mar-
ket-place
But now, you promised me to say a
word
About . . . a friend, who once, long
years ago,
Took God's place toward me, when
he leans and loves,
And does not thunder . . . whom at
last I left,
As all of us leave God. You thought
perhaps
I seemed to care for hearing of that
friend?
Now judge me! We have sat here
half an hour
And talked together of the child and
me,
And I not asked as much as 'What's
the thing

You had to tell me of the friend . . .
the friend?'
He's sad, I think you said,—he's sick
perhaps?
'Tis nought to Marian if he's sad or
sick.
Another would have crawled beside
your foot,
And prayed your words out. Why, a
beast, a dog,
A starved cat, if he had fed it once
with milk,
Would show less hardness. But I'm
dead, you see,
And that explains it."
Poor, poor thing, she spoke
And shook her head, as white and
calm as frost
On days too cold for raining any
more,
But still with such a face, so much
alive,
I could not choose but take it on my
arm,
And stroke the placid patience of its
cheeks,
Then told my story out, of Romney
Leigh,—
How, having lost her, sought her,
missed her still,
He, broken-hearted for himself and
her,
Had drawn the curtains of the world
awhile
As if he had done with morning.
There I stopped;
For when she gasped, and pressed me
with her eyes,
"And now . . . how is it with him ?
tell me now,"
I felt the shame of compensated
grief,
And chose my words with scruplo—
slowly stepped
Upon the slippery stones set here and
there
Across the sliding water. "Certainly,
As evening empties morning into
night,
Another morning takes the evening
up
With healthful, providential inter-
change;
And though he thought still of
her"—
"Yes, she knew,
She understood: she had supposed,
indeed,
That as one stops a hole upon a flute,

At which a new note comes and shapes the tune,
Excluding her would bring a worthier in,
And, long ere this, that Lady Walde-mat
He loved so" . . .
"Loved!" I started — "loved her so!
Now tell me" . . .
"I will tell you," she replied:
"But, since we're taking oaths, you'll promise first
That he in England, he, shall never learn
In what a dreadful trap his creature here,
Round whose unworthy neck he had meant to tie
The honorable ribbon of his name,
Fell unaware, and came to butchery:
Because, — I know him, — as he takes to heart
The grief of every stranger, he's not like
To banish mine as far as I should choose
In wishing him most happy. Now he leaves
To think of me, perverse, who went my way,
Unkind, and left him; but if once he knew . . .
Ah, then, the sharp nail of my cruel wrong
Would fasten me forever in his sight,
Like some poor curious bird, through each spread wing
Nailed high up over a fierce hunter's fire,
To spoil the dinner of all tenderer folk
Come in by chance. Nay, since your Marian's dead,
You shall not hang her up, but dig a hole,
And bury her in silence; ring no bells."

I answered gayly, though my whole voice wept,
"We'll ring the joy-bells, not the funeral-bells,
Because we have her back, dead or alive."

She never answered that, but shook her head;
Then low and calm, as one who, safe in heaven,

Shall tell a story of his lower life,
Unmoved by shame or anger, so she spoke.
She told me she had loved upon her knees,
As others pray, more perfectly absorbed
In the act and inspiration. She felt his
For just his uses, not her own at all,
His stool, to sit on or put up his foot;
His cup, to fill with wine or vinegar,
Whichever drink might please him at the chance,
For that should please her always; let him write
His name upon her . . . it seemed natural:
It was most precious, standing on his shelf,
To wait until he chose to lift his hand.
Well, well, — I saw her then, and must have seen
How bright her life went floating on her love,
Like wicks the housewives send afloat on oil
Which feeds them to a flame that lasts the night.

To do good seemed so much his business,
That having done it she was fain to think
Must fill up his capacity for joy.
At first she never mooted with herself
If he was happy, since he made her so;
Or if he loved her, being so much beloved.
Who thinks of asking if the sun is light,
Observing that it lightens? who's so bold,
To question God of his felicity?
Still less. And thus she took for granted first
What, first of all, she should have put to proof,
And sinned against him so, but only so.
"What could you hope," she said.
"of such as she?"
You take a kid you like, and turn it out

In some fair garden : though the creature's fond
And gentle, it will leap upon the beds,
And break your tulips, bite your tender trees :
The wonder would be if such innocence
Spoiled less. A garden is no place for kids."

And by degrees, when he who had chosen her
Brought in his courteous and benignant friends
To spend their goodness on her, which she took
So very gladly, as a part of his,—
By slow degrees it broke on her slow sense,
That she, too, in that Eden of delight
Was out of place, and, like the silly kid,
Still did most mischief where she meant most love.
A thought enough to make a woman mad,
(No beast in this but she may well go mad)

That saying "I am thine to love and use,"
May blow the plague in her protesting breath
To the very man for whom she claims to die ;
That, clinging round his neck, she pulls him down
And drowns him ; and that, lavishing her soul,
She hales perdition on him. "So, being mad,"
Said Marian . . .

"Ah ! who stirred such thoughts," you ask ?
"Whose fault it was that she should have such thoughts ?
None's fault, none's fault. The light comes, and we see :
But if it were not truly for our eyes,
There would be nothing seen for all the light :
And so with Marian. If she saw at last,
The sense was in her : Lady Waldemar
Had spoken all in vain else." "O my heart,
O prophet in my heart ! " I cried aloud.
"Then Lady Waldemar spoke ! "

"Did she speak ?"
Mused Marian softly, " or did she only sign ?
Or did she put a word into her face
And look, and so impress you with the word ?
Or leave it in the foldings of her gown,
Like rosemary smells a movement will shake out
When no one's conscious ? Who shall say, or guess ?
One thing alone was certain,—from the day
The gracious lady paid a visit first,
She, Marian, saw things different,
— felt distrust
Of all that sheltering roof of circumstance
Her hopes were building into with clay nests :
Her heart was restless, pacing up and down,
And fluttering, like dumb creatures before storms,
Not knowing wherefore she was ill at ease."

"And still the lady came," said Marian Erle, —
"Much oftener than he knew it, Mister Leigh.
She bade me never tell him she had come,
She liked to love me better than he knew :
So very kind was Lady Waldemar.
And every time she brought with her more light,
And every light made sorrow clearer . . . Well,
Ah, well ! we cannot give her blame for that :
'Twould be the same thing if an angel came,
Whose right should prove our wrong.
And every time
The lady came she looked more beautiful,
And spoke more like a flute among green trees,
Until at last, as one, whose heart being sad
On hearing lovely music, suddenly Dissolves in weeping, I brake out in tears
Before her, asked her counsel, — 'Had I erred

In being too happy? would she set
me straight?
For she, being wise and good, and
born above
The flats I had never climbed from,
could perceive
If such as I might grow upon the hills,
And whether such poor herb sufficed
to grow
For Romney Leigh to break his fast
upon't;
Or would he pine on such, or haply
starve?
She wrapt me in her generous arms at
once,
And let me dream a moment how it
feels
To have a real mother, like some
girls;
But, when I looked, her face was
younger . . . ay,
Youth's too bright not to be a little
hard,
And beauty keeps itself still upper-
most,
That's true! Though Lady Walde-
mar was kind,
She hurt me, hurt, as if the morning-
sun
Should sinite us on the eyelids when
we sleep,
And wake us up with headache. Ay,
and soon
Was light enough to make my heart
ache too.
She told me truths I asked for,—
'twas my fault,—
'That Romney could not love me, if
he would,
As men call loving: there are bloods
that flow
Together, like some rivers, and not
mix,
Through contraries of nature. He,
indeed,
Was set to wed me, to espouse my
class,
Act out a rash opinion; and, once
wed,
So just a man and gentle could not
choose
But make my life as smooth as mar-
riage-ring,
Bespeak me mildly, keep me a cheer-
ful house,
With servants, brooches, all the flow-
ers I liked,
And pretty dresses, silk the whole
year round' . . .

At which I stopped her,—'This for
me. And now
For him?' She hesitated,—truth
grew hard;
She owned 'Twas plain a man like
Romney Leigh
Required a wife more level to him-
self.
If day by day he had to bend his
height
To pick up sympathies, opinions,
And interchange the common talk of
life,
Which helps a man to live, as well as
talk,
His days were heavily taxed. Who
buys a staff
To fit the hand, that reaches but the
knee?
He'd feel it bitter to be forced to miss
The perfect joy of married suited
pairs,
Who, bursting through the separating
hedge
Of personal dues with that sweet eg-
lantine
Of equal love, keep saying, "So we
think,
It strikes us, that's our fancy." —
When I asked
If earnest will, devoted love, em-
ployed
In youth like mine, would fail to
raise me up,
As two strong arms will always raise
a child
To a fruit hung overhead, she sighed
and sighed . . .
'That could not be,' she feared. 'You
take a pink,
You dig about its roots, and water it,
And so improve it to a garden-pink,
But will not change it to a helio-
trope:
The kind remains. And then the
harder truth,—
This Romney Leigh, so rash to leap a
pale,
So bold for conscience, quick for mar-
tyrdom,
Would suffer steadily and never
flinch,
But suffer surely and keenly, when
his class
Turned shoulder on him for a shame-
ful match,
And set him up as ninepin in their
talk

To bowl him down with jestings.'
 There she paused,
 And when I used the pause in doubting that
 We wronged him, after all, in what we feared —
 'Suppose such things could never touch him more
 In his high conscience (if the things should be,)'
 Than, when the queen sits in an upper room,
 The horses in the street can spatter her! —
 A moment, hope came; but the lady closed
 That door, and nicked the lock, and shut it out,
 Observing wisely, that 'the tender heart
 Which made him over-soft to a lower class
 Would scarcely fail to make him sensitive
 To a higher, — how they thought, and what they felt.'

"Alas, alas!" said Marian, rocking slow
 The pretty baby who was near asleep,
 The eyelids creeping over the blue balls, —
 "She made it clear, too clear: I saw the whole.
 And yet who knows if I had seen my way
 Straight out of it by looking, though 'twas clear,
 Unless the generous lady, 'ware of this,
 Had set her own house all a-fire for me
 To light me forwards? Leaning on my face
 Her heavy agate eyes, which crushed my will,
 She told me tenderly, (as when men come
 To a hedsidge to tell people they must die)
 'She knew of knowledge, — ay, of knowledge knew,
 That Romney Leigh had loved her formerly.
 And she loved him, she might say, now the chance
 Was past. But that, of course, he never guessed,
 For something came between them, — something thin

As a cobweb, catching every fly of doubt
 To hold it buzzing at the window-pane,
 And help to dim the daylight. Ah, man's pride
 Or woman's, — which is greatest? most averse
 To brushing cobwebs? Well, but she and he
 Remained fast friends: it seemed not more than so,
 Because he had bound his hands, and could not stir.
 An honorable man, if somewhat rash;
 And she — not even for Romney would she spill
 A blot, as little even as a tear . . .
 Upon his marriage-contract, — not to gain
 A better joy for two than came by that;
 For, though I stood between her heart and heaven,
 She loved me wholly.'"
 Did I laugh, or curse?
 I think I sat there silent, hearing all,
 Ay, hearing double, — Marian's tale, at once,
 And Romney's marriage-vow, "*I'll keep to THEE,*"
 Which means that woman-serpent. Is it time
 For church now?
 "Lady Waldemar spoke more,"
 Continued Marian; "but as when a soul
 Will pass out through the sweetness of a song
 Beyond it, voyaging the uphill road,
 Even so mine wandered from the things I heard
 To those I suffered. It was afterward I shaped the resolution to the act.
 For many hours we talked. What need to talk?
 The fate was clear and close; it touched my eyes;
 But still the generous lady tried to keep
 The case afloat, and would not let it go,
 And argued, struggled upon Marian's side,
 Which was not Romney's, though she little knew
 What ugly monster would take up the end, —

What griping death within the
drowning death
Was ready to complete my sum of
death."

I thought,—Perhaps he's sliding now
the ring
Upon that woman's finger . . .

She went on:
"The lady, failing to prevail her way,
Upgathered my torn wishes from
the ground,
And pieced them with her strong be-
nevolence;
And as I thought I could breathe
freer air
Away from England, going without
pause,
Without farewell, just breaking with
a jerk
The blossomed offshoot from my
thorny life,
She promised kindly to provide the
means,
With instant passage to the colonies
And full protection, 'would commit
me straight
To one who had once been her wait-
ing-maid,
And had the customs of the world,
intent
On changing England for Australia
Herself, to carry out her fortune so,
For which I thanked the Lady Wal-
demar,

As men upon their death-beds thank
last friends
Who lay the pillow straight: it is not
much,
And yet 'tis all of which they are ca-
pable,—
This lying smoothly in a bed to die.
And so, 'twas fixed; and so, from
day to day,
The woman named came in to visit
me."

Just then the girl stopped speaking,
sate erect,
And stared at me as if I had been a
ghost,
(Perhaps I looked as white as any
ghost)
With large-eyed horror. "Does God
make," she said,
"All sorts of creatures really, do you
think?
Or is it that the Devil slavers them
So excellently, that we come to doubt

Who's stronger,—he who makes, or
he who mars?
I never liked the woman's face, or
voice,
Or ways: it made me blush to look at
her;
It made me tremble if she touched my
hand;
And when she spoke a fondling word,
I shrank
As if one hated me who had power
to hurt;
And, every time she came, my veins
ran cold,
As somebody were walking on my
grave.
At last I spoke to Lady Waldemar:
'Could such a one be good to trust?'
I asked.
Whereat the lady stroked my cheek,
and laughed
Her silver laugh (one must be born
to laugh
To put such music in it),—'Foolish
girl,
Your scattered wits are gathering wool
beyond
The sheep-walk reaches! — leave the
thing to me.'
And therefore, half in trust, and half
in scorn
That I had heart still for another fear
In such a safe despair, I left the thing.

"The rest is short. I was obedient:
I wrote my letter which delivered him
From Marian to his own prosperities,
And followed that bad guide. The
lady? — hush,
I never blame the lady. Ladies who
Sit high, however willing to look
down,
Will scarce see lower than their dain-
ty feet;
And Lady Waldemar saw less than I,
With what a Devil's daughter I went
forth
Along the swine's road, down the
precipice,
In such a curl of hell-foam caught
and choked,
No shriek of soul in anguish could
pierce through
To fetch some help. They say there's
help in heaven
For all such cries. But if one cries
from hell . . .
What then? — the heavens are deaf
upon that side.

"A woman . . . hear me, let me make it plain . . .
 A woman . . . not a monster . . . both her breasts
 Made right to suckle babes . . . she took me off
 A woman also, young and ignorant, And heavy with my grief, my two poor eyes
 Near washed away with weeping, till the trees,
 The blessed unaccustomed trees and fields
 Ran either side the train like stranger dogs
 Unworthy of any notice,—took me off So dull, so blind, so only half alive, Not seeing by what road, nor by what ship,
 Nor toward what place, nor to what end of all.
 Men carry a corpse thus,—past the doorway, past
 The garden-gate, the children's play-ground, up
 The green lane,—then they leave it in the pit,
 To sleep and find corruption, cheek to cheek
 With him who stinks since Friday.
 "But suppose:
 To go down with one's soul into the grave,
 To go down half dead, half alive, I say,
 And wake up with corruption . . . cheek to cheek
 With him who stinks since Friday!
 There it is,
 And that's the horror of't, Miss Leigh.
 "You feel?
 You understand?—no, do not look at me,
 But understand. The blank, blind weary way
 Which led, where'er it led, away at least;
 The shifted ship . . . to Sydney, or to France,
 Still bound, wherever else, to another land;
 The swooning sickness on the dismal sea,
 The foreign shore, the shameful house, the night,
 The feeble blood, the heavy-headed grief . . .
 No need to bring their damnable drugged cup,

And yet they brought it. Hell's so prodigal
 Of Devil's gifts, hunts liberally in packs,
 Will kill no poor small creature of the wilds
 But fifty red wide throats must smoke at it,
 As his at me . . . when waking up at last . . .
 I told you that I waked up in the grave.
 "Enough so!—it is plain enough so.
 True,
 We wretches cannot tell out all our wrong
 Without offence to decent happy folk.
 I know that we must scrupulously hint
 With half-words, delicate reserves,
 the thing
 Which no one scrupled we should feel in full.
 Let pass the rest, then; only leave my oath
 Upon this sleeping child,—man's violence,
 Not man's seduction, made me what I am,
 As lost as . . . I told him I should be lost.
 When mothers fail us, can we help ourselves?
 That's fatal! And you call it being lost,
 That down came next day's noon, and caught me there
 Half gibbering and half raving on the floor,
 And wondering what had happened up in heaven,
 That suns should dare to shine when God himself Was certainly abolished.
 "I was mad, How many weeks I know not,—many weeks.
 I think they let me go when I was mad:
 They feared my eyes, and loosed me, as boys might
 A mad dog which they had tortured. Up and down
 I went, by road and village, over tracts
 Of open foreign country, large and strange,



"And there I sate, one evening by the road,
I, Marian Erlc." -- Page 121.

Crossed everywhere by long, thin
poplar-lines
Like fingers of some ghastly ske'eton
hand
Through sunlight and through moon-
light evermore
Pushed out from hell itself to pluck
me back,
And resolute to get me, slow and sure;
While every roadside Christ upon his
cross
Hung reddening through his gory
wounds at me,
And shook his nails in anger, and
came down
To follow a mile after, wading up
The low vines and green wheat, cry-
ing, "Take the girl!
She's none of mine from henceforth."
Then I knew
(But this is somewhat dimmer than
the rest)
The charitable peasants gave me bread,
And leave to sleep in straw; and
twice they tied,
At parting, Mary's image round my
neck.
How heavy it seemed! —as heavy as
a stone;
A woman has been strangled with
less weight:
I threw it in a ditch to keep it clean,
And ease my breath a little, when
none looked:
I did not need such safeguards: brutal
men
Stopped short, Miss Leigh, in insult,
when they had seen
My face, — I must have had an awful
look.
And so I lived: the weeks passed on,
— I lived.
'Twas living my old tramp-life o'er
again,
But this time in a dream, and hunted
round
By some prodigious dream-fear at my
back,
Which ended yet: my brain cleared
presently;
And there I sate, one evening, by the
road,
I, Marian Erle, myself, alone, undone,
Facing a sunset low upon the flats
As if it were the finish of all time,
The great red stone upon my sepul-
chre,
Which angels were too weak to roll
away.

SEVENTH BOOK.

"THE woman's motive? shall we
daub ourselves
With finding roots for nettles? 'tis
soft clay,
And easily explored. She had the
means,
The moneys, by the lady's liberal
grace,
In trust for that Australian scheme
and me,
Which so, that she might clutch with
both her hands,
And chink to her naughty uses un-
disturbed,
She served me (after all it was not
strange:
'Twas only what my mother would
have done)
A motherly, right damnable good
turn.

"Well, after. There are nettles
everywhere;
But smooth green grasses are more
common still:
The blue of heaven is larger than the
cloud.
A miller's wife at Clichy took me in,
And spent her pity on me,—made
me calm,
And merely very reasonably sad.
She found me a servant's place in
Paris, where
I tried to take the cast-off life again,
And stood as quiet as a beaten ass,
Who, having fallen through overloads,
stands up
To let them charge him with another
pack.

"A few months, so. My mistress,
young and light,
Was easy with me, less for kindness
than
Because she led, herself, an easy
time
Betwixt her lover and her looking-
glass,
Scarce knowing which way she was
praised the most.
She felt so pretty and so pleased all
day,
She could not take the trouble to be
cross,
But sometimes, as I stooped to tie her
shoe,

Would tap me softly with her slender foot,
Still restless with the last night's dancing in't,
And say, 'Fie, pale-face! Are you English girls
All grave and silent? mass-book still, and Lent?
And first-communion pallor on your cheeks,
Worn past the time for't? Little fool, be gay!'
At which she vanished, like a fairy, through
A gap of silver laughter.

"Came an hour
When all went otherwise. She did not speak,
But clinched her brows, and clipped me with her eyes
As if a viper with a pair of tongs,
Too far for any touch, yet near enough
To view the writhing creature,—then at last,
'Stand still there, in the holy Virgin's name,
Thou Marian: thou'rt no reputable girl,
Although sufficient dull for twenty saints!
I think thou mock'st me and my house,' she said;
'Confess thou'l be a mother in a month,
Thou mask of saintship.'

"Could I answer her?
The light broke in so. It meant *that*, then, *that*?
I had not thought of that, in all my thoughts,
Through all the cold numb aching of my brow,
Through all the heaving of impatient life
Which threw me on death at intervals: through all
The upbreak of the fountains of my heart
The rains had swelled too large. It could mean *that*?
Did God make mothers out of victims, then,
And set such pure amens to hideous deeds?
Why not? He overblows an ugly grave
With violets which blossom in the spring.
And I could be a mother in a month?

I hope it was not wicked to be glad.
I lifted up my voice and wept, and laughed—
To heaven, not her—until it tore my throat.
'Confess, confess!' What was there to confess,
Except man's cruelty, except my wrong?
Except this anguish, or this ecstasy?
This shame or glory? The light woman there
Was small to take it in: an acorn-cup
Would take the sea in sooner.
"Good!" she cried:
'Unmarried and a mother, and she laughs!
These unchaste girls are always impudent.
Get out, intriguer! Leave my house, and trot!
I wonder you should look me in the face,
With such a filthy secret.'
"Then I rolled
My scanty bundle up, and went my way,
Washed white with weeping, shuddering, head and foot,
With blind hysterick passion, staggering forth
Beyond those doors. 'Twas natural, of course,
She should not ask me where I meant to sleep;
I might sleep well beneath the heavy Seine,
Like others of my sort: the bed was laid
For us. But any woman, womanly, had thought of him who should be in a month,
The sinless babe that should be in a month,
And if by chance he might be warmer housed
Than underneath such dreary dripping eaves."

I broke on Marian there. "Yet she herself,
A wife, I think, had scandals of her own,
A lover not her husband."
"Ay," she said;
"But gold and meal are measured otherwise:
I learnt so much at school," said Marian Erle.

"O crooked world," I cried, "ridiculous,
If not so lamentable! 'Tis the way
With these light women of a thrifty
vice,
My Marian, — always hard upon the
rent
In any sister's virtue! while they
keep
Their own so darned and patched
with perfidy,
That, though a rag itself, it looks as
well.
Across a street, in balcony or coach,
As any perfect stuff might. For my
part,
I'd rather take the wind-side of the
stews
Than touch such women with my fin-
ger-end!
They top the poor street-walker by
their lie,
And look the better for being so much
worse:
The Devil's most devilish when re-
spectable.
But you, dear, and your story."

"All the rest
Is here," she said, and signed upon
the child.
"I found a mistress-seamstress who
was kind,
And let me sew in peace among her
girls.
And what was better than to draw
the threads
All day and half the night for him
and him?
And so I lived for him, and so he
lives;
And so I know, by this time, God
lives too."

She smiled beyond the sun, and ended
so,
And all my soul rose up to take her
part
Against the world's successes, vir-
tues, fames.
"Come with me, sweetest sister," I
returned,
"And sit within my house and do me
good
From henceforth, thou and thine! ye
are my own
From henceforth. I am lonely in the
world,
And thou art lonely, and the child is
half

An orphan. Come; and henceforth
thou and I,
Being still together, will not miss a
friend,
Nor he a father, since two mothers
shall
Make that up to him. I am journey-
ing south,
And in my Tuscan home I'll find a
niche
And set thee there, my saint, the
child and thee,
And burn the lights of love before
thy face,
And ever at thy sweet look cross my-
self
From mixing with the world's pros-
perities;
That so, in gravity and holy calm,
We two may live on toward the truer
life."

She looked me in the face and an-
swered not,
Nor signed she was unworthy, nor
gave thanks,
But took the sleeping child, and held
it out
To meet my kiss, as if requiting me
And trusting me at once. And thus,
at once,
I carried him and her to where I live:
She's there now, in the little room,
asleep,
I hear the soft child-breathing through
the door;
And all three of us, at to-morrow's
break,
Pass onward, homeward, to our Italy.
O Romney Leigh! I have your debts
to pay,
And I'll be just and pay them.

But yourself!
To pay your debts is scarcely difficult;
To buy your life is nearly impossi-
ble,
Being sold away to Lamia. My head
aches;
I cannot see my road along this dark;
Nor can I creep and grope, as fits the
dark,
For these foot-catching robes of wo-
manhood:
A man might walk a little . . . but
I! — He loves
The Lamia-woman, — and I write to
him
What stops his marriage, and destroys
his peace,

Or what perhaps shall simply trouble him,
Until she only need to touch his sleeve
With just a finger's tremulous white flame,
Saying, "Ah, Aurora Leigh! a pretty tale,
A very pretty poet! I can guess
The motive," —then, to catch his eyes in hers
And vow she does not wonder, and they two
To break in laughter, as the sea along
A melancholy coast, and float up higher,
In such a laugh, their fatal weeds of love!
Ay, fatal, ay. And who shall answer me?
Fate has not hurried tides, and if tonight
My letter would not be a night too late,
An arrow shot into a man that's dead,
To prove a vain intention? Would I show
The new wife vile to make the husband mad?
No, Lania! shut the shutters, bar the door.
From every glimmer on thy serpent-skin:
I will not let thy hideous secret out
To agonize the man I love — I mean
The friend I love . . . as friends love.
It is strange,
To-day, while Marian told her story like
To absorb most listeners, how I listened chief
To a voice not hers, nor yet that enemy's;
Nor God's in wrath . . . but one that mixed with mine
Long years ago among the garden-trees,
And said to me, to me too, "Be my wife,
Aurora." It is strange with what a swell
Of yearning passion, as a snow of ghosts
Might beat against the impervious door of heaven,
I thought, "Now, if I had been a woman, such
As God made women, to save men by love,

By just my love I might have saved this man,
And made a nobler poem for the world
Than all I have failed in." But I failed besides
In this; and now he's lost — through me alone!
And, by my only fault, his empty house
Sucks in at this same hour a wind from hell
To keep his hearth cold, make his casements creak
Forever to the tune of plague and sin —
O Romney, O my Romney, O my friend!
My cousin and friend! my helper, when I would!
My love, that might be! mine!
Why, how one weeps when one's too weary! Were a witness by,
He'd say some folly . . . that I loved the man,
Who knows? . . . and make me laugh again for scorn.
At strongest, women are as weak in flesh,
As men, at weakest, vilest, are in soul:
So hard for women to keep pace with men!
As well give up at once, sit down at once,
And weep as I do. Tears, tears! why we weep?
'Tis worth inquiry? — That we've shamed a life,
Or lost a love, or missed a world, perhaps?
By no means. Simply that we've walked too far,
Or talked too much, or felt the wind i' the east;
And so we weep, as if both body and soul
Broke up in water — this way.
Poor mixed rags
Forsooth we're made of, like those other dolls
That lean with pretty faces into fairs.
It seems as if I had a man in me,
Despising such a woman. Yet, indeed,
To see a wrong or suffering moves us all
To undo it, though we should undo ourselves;

Ay, all the more that we undo ourselves :
 That's womanly, past doubt, and not ill-moved.
 A natural movement, therefore, on my part,
 To fill the chair up of my cousin's wife,
 And save him from a Devil's company!
 We're all so, — made so : 'tis our woman's trade
 To suffer torment for another's ease.
 The world's male chivalry has perished out ;
 But women are knights-errant to the last ;
 And if Cervantes had been Shakespeare too,
 He had made his Don a Donna.
 So it clears,
 And so we rain our skies blue.
 Put away this weakness. If, as I have just now said,
 A man's within me, let him act himself,
 Ignoring the poor conscious trouble of blood
 That's called the woman merely. I will write
 Plain words to England, — if too late, too late ;
 If ill accounted, then accounted ill :
 We'll trust the heavens with something.

“ Dear Lord Howe,
 You'll find a story on another leaf
 Of Marian Erle, — what noble friend of yours
 She trusted once, through what flagitious means,
 To what disastrous ends : the story's true.
 I found her wandering on the Paris quays,
 A babe upon her breast, — unnatural
 Unseasonable outcast on such snow,
 Unthawed to this time. I will tax in this
 Your friendship, friend, if that convicted she
 Be not his wife yet, to denounce the facts
 To himself, but otherwise to let them pass
 On tiptoe like escaping murderers,
 And tell my cousin merely — Marian lives,

Is found, and finds her home with such a friend,
 Myself, Aurora. Which good news,
 ‘ She's found,’ Will help to make him merry in his love :
 I send it, tell him, for my marriage-gift,
 As good as orange-water for the nerves,
 Or perfumed gloves for headache, — though aware
 That he, except of love, is scarcely sick :
 I mean the new love this time . . . since last year.
 Such quick forgetting on the part of men !
 Is any shrewder trick upon the cards
 To enrich them ? Pray instruct me how 'tis done.
 First, clubs ; and, while you look at clubs, 'tis spades ;
 That's prodigy. The lightning strikes a man,
 And, when we think to find him dead and charred . . .
 Why, there he is on a sudden playing pipes
 Beneath the splintered elm-tree !
 Crime and shame, And all their hoggery, trample your smooth world,
 Nor leave more foot-marks than Apollo's kine,
 Whose hoofs were muffled by the thieving god
 In tamarisk-leaves and myrtle. I'm so sad,
 So weary and sad to-night, I'm somewhat sour, —
 Forgive me. To be blue and shrew at once
 Exceeds all toleration except yours ;
 But yours, I know, is infinite. Farewell !

To-morrow we take train for Italy.
 Speak gently of me to your gracious wife,
 As one, however far, shall yet be near
 In loving wishes to your house.”

I sign.
 And now I loose my heart upon a page,
 This — “ Lady Waldemar, I'm very glad
 I never liked you ; which you knew so well

You spared me, in your turn, to like
me much.
Your liking surely had done worse for
me
Than has your loathing, though the
last appears
Sufficiently unscrupulous to hurt,
And not afraid of judgment. Now
there's space
Between our faces, I stand off, as if
I judged a stranger's portrait, and
pronounced
Indifferently the type was good or bad.
What matter to me that the lines are
false?
I ask you. Did I ever ink my lips
By drawing your name through them
as a friend's?
Or touch your hands as lovers do?
Thank God.
I never did! And since you're proved
so vile,
Ay, vile, I say,—we'll show it pres-
ently,—
I'm not obliged to nurse my friend in
you,
Or wash out my own blots in counting
yours,
Or even excuse myself to honest
souls
Who seek to press my lip, or clasp my
palms,—
'Alas, but Lady Waldemar came first!'
'Tis true, by this time you may near
me so
That you're my cousin's wife. You've
gambled deep
As Lucifer, and won the morning-star
In that case; and the noble house of
Leigh
Must henceforth with its good roof
shelter you.
I cannot speak and burn you up be-
tween
Those rafters, I who am born a Leigh;
nor speak
And pierce your breast through Rom-
ney's, I who live
His friend and cousin: so you're safe.
You two
Must grow together like the tares and
wheat
Till God's great fire. But make the
best of time.
"And hide this letter: let it speak no
more
Than I shall, how you tricked poor
Marian Erle,

And set her own love digging its own
grave
Within her green hope's pretty gar-
den-ground,—
Ay, sent her forth with some one of
your sort
To a wicked house in France, from
which she fled
With curses in her eyes and ears and
throat,
Her whole soul choked with curses,
mad, in short,
And madly scouring up and down for
weeks
The foreign hedgeless country, lone
and lost,—
So innocent, male fiends might slink
within
Remote hell-corners seeing her so de-
filed.
"But you,—you are a woman, and
more bold.
To do you justice, you'd not shrink to
face . . .
We'll say, the unledged life in the
other room,
Which, treading down God's corn,
you tread in sight
Of all the dogs in reach of all the
guns,—
Ay, Marian's babe, her poor un-
fathered child,
Her yearling babe! —you'd face him
when he wakes
And opens up his wonderful blue
eyes;
You'd meet them, and not wink per-
haps, nor fear
God's triumph in them and supreme
revenge
When righting his creation's balance-
scale
(You pulled as low as Tophet) to the
top
Of most celestial innocence. For me
Who am not as bold, I own those in-
fant eyes
Have set me praying.
"While they look at heaven,
No need of protestation in my words
Against the place you've made them!
let them look.
They'll do your business with the
heavens, be sure:
I spare you common curses.
"Ponder this;
If haply you're the wife of Romney
Leigh,

(For which inheritance beyond your birth
 You sold that poisonous porridge
 called your soul)
 I charge you be his faithful and true wife!
 Keep warm his hearth, and clean his board, and, when
 He speaks, be quick with your obedience;
 Still grind your paltry wants and low desires
 To dust beneath his heel, though, even thus,
 The ground must hurt him: it was writ of old,
 'Ye shall not yoke together ox and ass,'
 The nobler and ignobler. Ay; but you
 Shall do your part as well as such ill things
 Can do aught good. You shall not vex him,—mark,
 You shall not vex him, jar him when he's sad,
 Or cross him when he's eager. Understand
 To trick him with apparent sympathies,
 Nor let him see thee in the face too near,
 And unlearn thy sweet seeming. Pay the price
 Of lies by being constrained to lie on still.
 'Tis easy for thy sort: a million more
 Will scarcely damn thee deeper.
 " Doing which
 You are very safe from Marian and myself:
 We'll breathe as softly as the infant here,
 And stir no dangerous embers. Fail a point,
 And show our Romney wounded, ill content,
 Tortmented in his home, we open mouth,
 And such a noise will follow, the last trump's
 Will scarcely seem more dreadful, even to you;
 You'll have no pipers after: Romney will
 (I know him) push you forth as none of his,
 All other men declaring it well done;

While women, even the worst, you like, will draw
 Their skirts back, not to brush you in the street:
 And so I warn you. I'm . . . Aurora Leigh."

The letter written, I felt satisfied.
 The ashes smouldering in me were thrown out
 By handfuls from me: I had writ my heart,
 And wept my tears, and now was cool and calm;
 And, going straightway to the neighboring room,
 I lifted up the curtains of the bed
 Where Marian Erle—the babe upon her arm,
 Both faces leaned together like a pair
 Of folded innocences self-complete,
 Each smiling from the other—smiled and slept.
 There seemed no sin, no shame, no wrath, no grief.
 I felt she too had spoken words that night,
 But softer certainly, and said to God,
 Who laughs in heaven perhaps that such as I
 Should make ado for such as she.
 "Defiled"
 I wrote? "defiled" I thought her?
 Stoop,
 Stoop lower, Aurora! get the angels' leave
 To creep in somewhere, humbly on your knees,
 Within this round of sequestration white
 In which they have wrapt earth's foundlings, heaven's elect.

The next day we took train to Italy,
 And fled on southward in the roar of steam.
 The marriage-bells of Romney must be loud
 To sound so clear through all. I was not well,
 And truly, though the truth is like a jest,
 I could not choose but fancy, half the way,
 I stood alone i' the belfry, fifty bells,
 Of naked iron, mad with merriment,
 (As one who laughs and cannot stop himself)
 All clanking at me, in me, over me,

Until I shrieked a shriek I could not hear,
And swooned with noise, but still, along my swoon,
Was 'ware the baffled changes backward rang,
Prepared at each emerging sense to beat
And crash it out with clangor. I was weak;
I struggled for the posture of my soul
In upright consciousness of place and time,
But evermore, 'twixt waking and asleep,
Slipped somehow, staggered, caught at Marian's eyes
A moment, (it is very good for strength
To know that some one needs you to be strong)
And so recovered what I call myself, For that time.
I just knew it when we swept
Above the old roofs of Dijon. Lyons dropped
A spark into the night, half trodden out
Unseen. But presently the winding Rhone
Washed out the moonlight large along his banks
Which strained their yielding curves out clear and clean
To hold it,—shadow of town and castle blurred
Upon the hurrying river. Such an air
Blew thence upon the forehead,—half an air
And half a water—that I leaned and looked,
Then, turning back on Marian, smiled to mark
That she looked only on her child, who slept,
His face toward the moon too.
So we passed
The liberal open country and the close,
And shot through tunnels, like a lightning-wedge
By great Thor-bummers driven through the rock,
Which, quivering through the intestine blackness, splits,
And lets it in at once: the train swept in

Athrob with effort, trembling with resolve,
The fierce denouncing whistle wailing on,
And dying off, smothered in the shuddering dark;
While we self-awed, drew troubled breath, oppressed
As other Titans, underneath the pile
And nightmare of the mountains.
Out, at last, To catch the dawn afloat upon the land.
—Hills, slung forth broadly and gauntly everywhere,
Not cramp't in' their foundations, pushing wide
Rich outspreads of the vineyards and the corn,
(As if they entertained i' the name of France)
While down their straining sides stream'd manifest
A soil as red as Charlemagne's knightly blood,
To consecrate the verdure. Some one said,
“Marseilles! And lo, the city of Marseilles,
With all her ships behind her, and beyond,
The cimiter of ever-shining sea
For right-hand use, bared blue against the sky!
That night we spent between the purple heaven
And purple water. I think Marian slept;
But I, as a dog a-watch for his master's foot,
Who cannot sleep or eat before he hears,
I sat upon the deck, and watched the night,
And listened through the stars for Italy.
Those marriage-bells I spoke of sounded far,
As some child's go-cart in the street beneath
To a dying man who will not pass the day,
And knows it, holding by a hand he loves.
I, too, sat quiet, satisfied with death,
Sate silent. I could hear my own soul speak,

And had my friend ; for Nature comes sometimes,
And says, "I am ambassador for God."
I felt the wind soft from the land of souls ;
The old miraculous mountains heaved in sight,
One straining past another along the shore,
The way of grand dull Odyssean ghosts
Athirst to drink the cool blue wine of seas,
And stare on voyagers. Peak pushing peak,
They stood. I watched, beyond that Tyrian belt
Of intense sea betwixt them and the ship,
Down all their sides the misty olive-woods
Dissolving in the weak congenial moon,
And still disclosing some brown convent-tower,
That seems as if it grew from some brown rock,
Or many a little lighted village, dropt like a fallen star upon so high a point
You wonder what can keep it in its place
From sliding headlong with the waterfalls
Which powder all the myrtle and orange groves
With spray of silver. Thus my Italy
Was stealing on us. Genoa broke with day ;
The Doria's long pale palace striking out,
From green hills in advance of the white town,
A marble finger dominant to ships,
Seen glimmering through the uncertain gray of dawn.

And then I did not think, "My Italy!"
I thought, "My father!" Oh, my father's house,
Without his presence! Places are too much,
Or else too little, for immortal man.—
Too little, when love's May o'er-grows the ground ;
Too much, when that luxuriant robe of green

Is rustling to our ankles in dead leaves.
'Tis only good to be or here or there,
Because we had a dream on such a stone,
Or this or that; but once being wholly waked,
And come back to the stone without the dream,
We trip upon't, alas! and hurt ourselves ;
Or else it falls on us, and grinds us flat, —
The heaviest gravestone on this burying earth.
— But, while I stood and mused, a quiet touch
Fell light upon my arm, and, turning round,
A pair of moistened eyes convicted mine.
"What, Marian! is the babe astir so soon?"
"He sleeps," she answered. "I have crept up thrice,
And seen you sitting, standing, still at watch.
I thought it did you good till now; but now"
"But now," I said, "you leave the child alone."
"And you're alone," she answered ; and she looked
As if I, too, were something. Sweet the help
Of one we have helped! Thanks, Marian, for such help.

I found a house at Florence on the hill
Of Bellosguardo. 'Tis a tower which keeps
A post of double observation o'er
That valley of Arno (holding as a hand
The outspread city) straight toward Fiesole
And Mount Morello and the setting sun,
The Vallombrosan mountains opposite,
Which sunrise fills as full as crystal cups
Turned red to the brim because their wine is red.
No sun could die, nor yet be born, unseen
By dwellers at my villa. Morn and eve

Were magnified before us in the pure
Imimitable space and pause of sky,
Intense as angels' garments blanched
with God,
Less blue than radiant. From the
outer wall
Of the garden drops the mystic float-
ing gray
Of olive-trees, (with interruptions
green
From maize and vine) until 'tis caught
and torn
Upon the abrupt black line of cypress-
es
Which signs the way to Florence.
Beautiful
The city lies along the ample vale,
Cathedral, tower and palace, piazza
and street,
The river trailing like a silver cord
Through all, and curling loosely, both
before
And after, over the whole stretch of
land
Sown whitely up and down its oppo-
site slopes
With farms and villas.

Many weeks had passed,
No word was granted. Last, a letter
came
From Vincent Carrington,—“ My dear
Miss Leigh,
You've been as silent as a poet should,
When any other man is sure to speak.
If sick, if vexed, if dumb, a silver
piece
Will split a man's tongue,—straight
he speaks, and says,
'Received that check.' But you . . .
I send you funds
To Paris, and you make no sign at
all.
Remember I'm responsible, and wait
A sign of you, Miss Leigh.

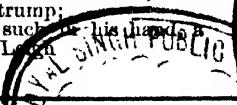
“ Meantime your book
Is eloquent as if you were not dumb;
And common critics, ordinarily deaf
To such fine meanings, and, like deaf
men, loath
To seem deaf, answering chance-wise,
yes or no,
'It must be,' or 'It must not,' (most
pronounced
When least convinced) pronounce for
once aright:
You'd think they really heard,—and
so they do . . .
The burr of three or four who really
hear

And praise your book aright: fame's
smallest trump
Is a great ear-trumpet for the deaf as
posts,
No other being effective. Fear not,
friend;
We think here you have written a
good book,
And you, a woman! It was in you
—yes,
I felt 'twas in you; yet I doubted
half
If that od-force of German Reichen-
bach,
Which still from female finger-tips
burns blue,
Could strike out as our masculine
white-heats
To quicken a man. Forgive me. All
my heart
Is quick with yours since, just a fort-
night since,
I read your book and loved it.
 “ Will you love
My wife too? Here's my secret I
might keep
A month more from you; but I yield
it up
Because I know you'll write the
sooner for't,
Most women (of your height even)
counting love
Life's only serious business. Who's
my wife
That shall be in a month? you ask?
nor guess?
Remember what a pair of topaz
eyes
You once detected, turned against
the wall,
That morning in my London paint-
ing-room;
The face half-sketched, and slurred;
the eyes alone!
But you . . . you caught them up
with yours, and said
'Kate Ward's eyes surely.' — Now I
own the truth:
I had thrown them there to keep
them safe from Jove,
They would so naughtily find out
their way
To both the heads of both my Danaës,
Where just it made me mad to look
at them.
Such eyes! I could not paint or think
of eyes
But those,—and so I flung them into
paint,

And turned them to the wall's care.
 Ay, but now
 I've let them out, my Kate's. I've
 painted her,
 (I change my style, and leave mythol-
 ogies),
 The whole sweet face: it looks upon
 my soul
 Like a face on water, to beget itself.
 A half-length portrait, in a hanging
 cloak
 Like one you wore once; 'tis a little
 frayed,—
 I pressed too for the nude, harmoni-
 ous arm;
 But she, she'd have her way, and
 have her cloak:
 She said she could be like you only
 so,
 And would not miss the fortune.
 Ah, my friend,
 You'll write and say she shall not
 miss your love
 Through meeting mine? in faith, she
 would not change.
 She has your books by heart more
 than my words,
 And quotes you up against me till I'm
 pushed
 Where, three months since, her eyes
 were: nay, in fact,
 Nought satisfied her but to make me
 paint
 Your last book folded in her dimpled
 hands,
 Instead of my brown palette, as I
 wished,
 And, grant me, the presentment had
 been newer:
 She'd grant me nothing. I com-
 pounded for
 The naming of the wedding-day next
 month,
 And gladly too. 'Tis pretty to re-
 mark
 How women can love women of your
 sort;
 And tie their hearts with love-knots
 to your feet,
 Grow insolent about you against
 men,
 And put us down by putting up the
 lip,
 As if a man—there are such, let us
 own,
 Who write not ill—remains a man,
 poor wretch,
 While you!— Write weaker than
 Aurora Leigh,

And there'll be women who believe
 of you
 (Besides my Kate) that if you walked
 on sand
 You would not leave a footprint.
 "Are you put
 To wonder by my marriage, like poor
 Leigh?
 'Kate Ward!' he said. 'Kate Ward!'
 he said anew.
 'I thought' . . . he said, and
 stopped, — 'I did not think' . . .
 And then he dropped to silence.
 "Ah, he's changed.
 I had not seen him, you're aware, for
 long,
 But went, of course. I have not
 touched on this
 Through all this letter, conscious of
 your heart,
 And writing lightlier for the heavy
 fact,
 As clocks are volatile with lead.

"How poor,
 To say I'm sorry! dear Leigh, dearest Leigh!
 In those old days of Shropshire,—
 pardon me,—
 When he and you fought many a field
 of gold
 On what you should do, or you should
 not do,—
 Make bread, or verses, (it just came
 to that)
 I thought you'd one day draw a silk-
 en peace
 Through a golden ring. I thought
 so: foolishly,
 The event proved; for you went
 more opposite
 To each other, month by month, and
 year by year,
 Until this happened. God knows
 best, we say,
 But hoarsely. When the fever took
 him first,
 Just after I had writ to you in
 France,
 They tell me Lady Waldemar mixed
 drinks,
 And counted grains, like any salaried
 nurse,
 Excepting that she wept too. Then,
 Lord Howe,
 You're right about Lord Howe, Lord
 Howe's a trump;
 And yet, with such a chap
 man like Le-



May lose as *he* does. There's an end to all,
Yes, even this letter, though this second sheet
May find you doubtful. Write a word for Kate:
She reads my letters always, like a wife,
And if she sees her name I'll see her smile
And share the luck. So, bless you, friend of two!
I will not ask you what your feeling is
At Florence with my pictures. I can hear
Your heart a-flutter over the snow-hills;
And, just to pace the Pitti with you once,
I'd give a half-hour of to-morrow's walk
With Kate . . . I think so. Vincent Carrington."

The noon was hot: the air scorched like the sun,
And was shut out. The closed persiani threw
Their long-scored shadows on my villa-floor,
And interlined the golden atmosphere.
Straight, still,—across the pictures on the wall,
The statuette on the console, (of young Love)
And Psyche made one marble by a kiss)
The low couch where I leaned, the table near,
The vase of lilies Marian pulled last night,
(Each green leaf and each white leaf ruled in black
As if for writing some new text of fate)
And the open letter rested on my knee;
But there the lines swerved, trembled, though I sat
Untroubled, plainly, reading it again
And three times. Well, he's married: that is clear.
No wonder that he's married, nor, much more,
That Vincent's therefore "sorry."
Why, of course

The lady nursed him when he was not well,
Mixed drinks—unless nepenthe was the drink
'Twas scarce worth telling. But a man in love
Will see the whole sex in his mistress' hood,
The prettiest for its lining of fair rose,
Although he catches back and says at last,
"I'm sorry." Sorry. Lady Walde-mar
At prettiest, under the said hood, preserved
From such a light as I could hold to her face
To flare its ugly wrinkles out to shame,
Is scarce a wife for Romney, as friends judge,—
Aurora Leigh, or Vincent Carrington: That's plain. And if he's "conscious of my heart" . . .
It may be natural, though the phrase is strong;
(One's apt to use strong phrases, being in love)
And even that stuff of "fields of gold," "gold rings,"
And what he "thought," poor Vincent! what he "thought,"
May never mean enough to ruffle me.
—Why, this room stifles. Better burn than choke:
Best have air, air, although it comes with fire;
Throw open blinds and windows to the noon,
And take a blister on my brow instead
Of this dead weight! best perfectly be stunned
By those insufferable cicale, sick
And hoarse with rapture of the summer heat,
That sing, like poets, till their hearts break,—sing
Till men say, "It's too tedious." Books succeed,
And lives fail. Do I feel it so at last?
Kate loves a worn-out cloak for being like mine,
While I live self-despised for being myself,
And yearn toward some one else, who yearns away

From what he is, in his turn. Strain
a step
Forever, yet gain no step? Are we
such
We cannot, with our admirations
even,
Our tiptoe aspirations, touch a
thing
That's higher than we? Is all a dis-
mal flat,
And God alone above each,—as the
sun
O'er level lagunes, to make them
shine and stink,—
Laying stress upon us with immediate
flame,
While we respond with our miasmal
fog,
And call it mounting higher because
we grow
More highly fatal?

Tush, Aurora Leigh!
You wear your sackcloth looped in
Caesar's way,
And brag your failings as mankind's.
Be still.
There *is* what's higher, in this very
world.
Than you can live, or catch at. Stand
aside,
And look at others,—instance little
Kate.
She'll make a perfect wife for Car-
rington.
She always has been looking round
the earth
For something good and green to
alight upon
And nestle into,—with those soft-
winged eyes,
Subsiding now beneath his manly
hand,
'Twixt trembling lids of inexpressive
joy.
I will not scorn her, after all, too
much,
That so much she should love me.
A wise man
Can pluck a leaf, and find a lecture
in't;
And I too . . . God has made me,—
I've a heart
That's capable of worship, love, and
loss:
We say the same of Shakspeare's.
I'll be meek
And learn to reverence, even this
poor myself.

The book, too—pass it. "A good
book," says he,
"And you a woman." I had laughed
at that
But long since. I'm a woman, it is
true,
Alas, and woe to us, when we feel it
most!
Then least care have we for the
crowns and goals
And compliments on writing our good
books.
The book has some truth in it, I be-
lieve;
And truth outlives pain, as the soul
does life.
I know we talk our Phaedons to the
end,
Through all the dismal faces that we
make,
O'er-wrinkled with dishonoring agony
From decomposing drugs. I have
written truth,
And I a woman,—feeble, partially,
Inaptly in presentation, Romney'll
add,
Because a woman. For the truth it-
self,
That's neither man's nor woman's,
but just God's;
None else has reason to be proud of
truth;
 Himself will see it sifted, disin-
thralled,
And kept upon the height and in the
light,
As far as and no farther than 'tis
truth;
For now he has left off calling firma-
ments
And strata, flowers and creatures,
very good,
He says it still of truth, which is his
own.

Truth, so far, in my book,—the truth
which draws
Through all things upwards,—that a
twofold world
Must go to a perfect cosmos. Natural
things
And spiritual,—who separates those
two
In art, in morals, or the social drift,
Tears up the bond of nature, and
brings death,
Paints futile pictures, writes unreal
verse,

Leads vulgar days, deals ignorantly
with men,
Is wrong, in short, at all points. We
divide
This apple of life, and cut it through
the pips:
The perfect round which fitted Venus'
hand
Has perished as utterly as if we ate
Both halves. Without the spiritual,
observe,
The natural's impossible, no form,
No motion: without sensuous, spirit-
ual
Is inappreciable, no beauty or power.
And in this twofold sphere the two-
fold man
(For still the artist is intensely a
man)
Holds firmly by the natural to teach
The spiritual beyond it, fixes still
The type with mortal vision to pierce
through,
With eyes immortal to the antetype.
Some call the ideal, better called the
real,
And certain to be called so presently,
When things shall have their names.
Look long enough
On any peasant's face here, coarse
and lined,
You'll catch Antinous somewhere in
that clay,
As perfect-featured as he yearns at
Rome
From marble pale with beauty; then
persist,
And, if your apprehension's compe-
tent,
You'll find some fairer angel at his
back,
As much exceeding him as he the
boor,
And pushing him with empyreal dis-
dain
Forever out of sight. Ay, Carring-
ton
Is glad of such a creed: an artist
must,
Who paints a tree, a leaf, a common
stone
With just his hand, and finds it sud-
denly
Apiece with and conterminous to his
soul.
Why else do these things move him,
— leaf, or stone?
The bird's not moved, that pecks at a
spring-shoot;

Nor yet the horse, before a quarry
agrazed:
But man, the twofold creature, ap-
prehends
The twofold manner, in and out-
wardly,
And nothing in the world comes sin-
gle to him,
A mere itself,—cup, column, or can-
dlestick,
All patterns of what shall be in the
Mount;
The whole temporal show related
royally,
And built up to eterne significance
Through the open arms of God.
“There's nothing great
Nor small,” has said a poet of our
day,
Whose voice will ring beyond the
curfew of eve,
And not be thrown out by the matin's
bell:
And truly, I reiterate, Nothing's
small!
No lily-mutilled hum of a summer-bee,
But finds some coupling with the
spinning stars;
No pebble at your foot, but proves a
sphere;
No chaffinch, but implies the cheru-
bit;
And (glancing on my own thin,
veined wrist)
In such a little tremor of the blood
The whole strong clamor of a vehem-
ent soul
Doth utter itself distinct. Earth's
crammed with heaven,
And every common bush afire with
God;
But only he who sees takes off his
shoes,
The rest sit round it and pluck black-
berries,
And daub their natural faces un-
aware
More and more from the first simili-
tude.

Truth, so far, in my book! — a truth
which draws
From all things upward. I, Aurora,
still
Have felt it hound me through the
wastes of life
As Jove did Io; and until that hand
Shall overtake me wholly, and on my
head

Lay down its large unfluctuating peace,
The feverish gad-fly pricks me up and down.
It must be. Art's the witness of what is
Behind this show. If this world's show were all,
Then imitation would be all in art. There Jove's hand gripes us! for we stand here, we,
If genuine artists, witnessing for God's Complete, consummate, undivided work;
—That every natural flower which grows on earth Implies a flower upon the spiritual side,
Substantial, archetypal, all aglow With blossoming causes, — not so far away,
But we whose spirit-sense is somewhat cleared May catch at something of the bloom and breath, —
Too vaguely apprehended, though, indeed,
Still apprehended, consciously or not, And still transferred to picture, music, verse,
For thrilling audient and beholding souls
By signs and touches which are known to souls.
How known, they know not; why, they cannot find:
So straight call out on genius, say, "A man produced this," when much rather they should say,
" 'Tis insight, and he saw this." Thus is art Self-magnified in magnifying a truth Which, fully recognized, would change the world,
And shift its morals. If a man could feel, Not one day, in the artist's ecstasy, But every day, — feast, fast, or working day, — The spiritual significance burn through The hieroglyphic of material shows, Henceforward he would paint the globe with wings, And reverence fish and fowl, the bull, the tree, And even his very body as a man;

Which now he counts so vile, that all the towns Make offal of their daughters for its use On summer-nights, when God is sad in heaven To think what goes on in his recreant world He made quite other; while that moon he made To shine there, at the first love's covenant, Shines still, convictive as a marriage-ring Before adulterous eyes. How sure it is, That, if we say a true word, instantly We feel 'tis God's, not ours, and pass it on, Like bread at sacrament we taste and pass, Nor handle for a moment, as indeed We dared to set up any claim to such!
And I — my poem — let my readers talk. I'm closer to it, I can speak as well: I'll say with Romney, that the book is weak, The range uneven, the points of sight obscure, The music interrupted. Let us go. The end of woman (or of man, I think) Is not a book. Alas, the best of books Is but a word in art, which soon grows cramped, Stiff, dubious-statured, with the weight of years, And drops an accent or digamma down Some cranny of unfathomable time, Beyond the critic's reaching. Art itself, We've called the larger life, must feel the soul Live past it. For more's felt than is perceived, And more's perceived than can be interpreted, And love strikes higher with his lambent flame Than art can pile the fagots. Is it so? When Jove's hand meets us with composing touch, And when at last we are hushed and satisfied,

Then I does not call it truth, but
love?
Well, well ! my father was an English-
man :
My mother's blood in me is not so
strong
That I should bear this stress of Tus-
can noon,
And keep my wits. The town there
seems to seethe
In this Medean boil-pot of the sun,
And all the patient hills are bubbling
round
As if a prick would leave them flat.
Does heaven
Keep far off, not to set us in a blaze ?
Not so ; let drag your fiery fringes,
heaven,
And burn us up to quiet Ah ! we
know
Too much here, not to know what's
best for peace ;
We have too much light here, not to
want more fire
To purify and end us. We talk, talk,
Conclude upon divine philosophies,
And get the thanks of men for hope-
ful books ;
Whereat we take our own life up, and
... pshaw !
Unless we piece it with another's
life,
(A yard of silk to carry out our lawn)
As well suppose my little handker-
chief
Would cover Samminiato, church and
all,
If out I threw it past the cypresses,
As, in this ragged, narrow life of mine,
Contain my own conclusions.
But at least
We'll shut up the persiani, and sit
down,
And when my head's done aching, in
the cool,
Write just a word to Kate and Car-
rington.
May joy be with them ! she has chosen
well,
And he not ill.
I should be glad, I think,
Except for Romney. Had he married
Kate,
I surely, surely, should be very glad.
This Florence sits upon me easily,
With native air and tongue. My
graves are calm,
And do not too much hurt me. Mari-
an's good,

Gentle, and loving, lets me hold the
child,
Or drags him up the hills to find me
flowers
And fill these vases ere I'm quite
awake,—
My grandiose red tulips, which grow
wild ;
Or Dante's purple lilies, which he
blew
To a larger bubble with his prophet
breath ;
Or one of those tall flowering reeds
that stand
In Arno like a sheaf of sceptres left
By some remote dynasty of dead gods
To suck the stream for ages, and get
green,
And blossom wheresoe'er a hand di-
vine
Had warmed the place with ichor.
Such I find
At early morning laid across my bed,
And wake up pelted with a childish
laugh
Which even Marian's low precipitous
"Hush!"
Has vainly interposed to put away ;
While I, with shut eyes, smile and
motion for
The dewy kiss that's very sure to come
From mouth and cheeks, the whole
child's face at once
Dissolved on mine, as if a nosegay
burst
Its string with the weight of roses
overblown,
And dropt upon me. Surely I should
be glad.
The little creature almost loves me
now,
And calls my name "Alola," strip-
ping off
The rs like thorns, to make it smooth
enough
To take between his dainty, milk-fed
lips.
God love him ! I should certainly be
glad,
Except, God help me ! that I'm sor-
rowful
Because of Romney.
Romney, Romney ! Well,
This grows absurd, — too like a tune
that runs
I' the head, and forces all things in
the world —
Wind, rain, the creaking gnat or stut-
tering fly —

To sing itself, and vex you ; yet perhaps
 A paltry tune you never fairly liked,
 Some "I'd be a butterfly," or "C'est l'amour."
 We're made so, — not such tyrants to ourselves,
 But still we are slaves to nature.
 Some of us Are turned, too, overmuch like some poor verse
 With a trick of ritournelle : the same thing goes,
 And comes back ever.

Vincent Carrington Is "sorry," and I'm sorry ; but he's strong
 To mount from sorrow to his heaven of love,
 And when he says at moments, "Poor, poor Leigh,
 Who'll never call his own so true a heart,
 So fair a face even," he must quickly lose
 The pain of pity in the blush he makes
 By his very pitying eyes. The snow, for him,
 Has fallen in May, and finds the whole earth warin',
 And melts at the first touch of the green grass.

But Romney,—he has chosen, after all.
 I think he had as excellent a sun To see by as most others ; and perhaps
 Has scarce seen really worse than some of us,
 When all's said. Let him pass. I'm not too much
 A woman, not to be a man for once,
 And bury all my dead like Alaric,
 Depositing the treasures of my soul In this drained water-course, then letting flow
 The river of life again with commerce-ships,
 And pleasure-barges full of silks and songs.
 Blow, winds, and help us.

Ah, we mock ourselves With talking of the winds ! perhaps as much
 With other resolutions. How it weighs,

This hot, sick air ! and how I covet here
 The dead's provision on the river-couch,
 With silver curtains drawn on tinkling rings ;
 Or else their rest in quiet crypts, laid by
 From heat and noise, from those cicale, say,
 And this more vexing heart-beat ! So it is.
 We covet for the soul the body's part, To die and rot. Even so, Aurora, ends
 Our aspiration who bespoke our place
 So far in the east. The occidental flats
 Had fed us fatter, therefore ? we have climbed
 Where herbage ends ? we want the beast's part now,
 And tire of the angel's ? Men define a man,
 The creature who stands front-ward to the stars,
 The creature who looks inward to himself,
 The tool-wright, laughing creature.
 'Tis enough : We'll say instead, the inconsequent creature, man,
 For that's his specialty. What creature else
 Conceives the circle, and then walks the square ?
 Loves things proved bad, and leaves a thing proved good ?
 You think the bee makes honey half a year,
 To loathe the comb in winter, and desire
 The little ant's food rather ? But a man — Note men ! — they are but women, after all,
 As women are but Auroras ! — there are men Born tender, apt to pale at a trodden worm,
 Who paint for pastime, in their favorite dream,
 Spruce auto-vestments flowered with crocus-flames ; There are, too, who believe in hell, and lie ;
 There are, too, who believe in heaven, and fear ;

There are, who waste their souls in
working out
Life's problem on these sands betwixt
two tides,
Concluding, "Give us the oyster's
part, in death."

Alas, long-suffering and most patient
God,
Thou needst be surer God to bear
with us
Than even to have made us! thou
aspire, aspire
From henceforth for me! thou who
hast thyself
Endured this fleshhood, knowing how
as a soaked
And sucking vesture it can drag us
down,
And choke us in the melancholy
deep,
Sustain me, that with thee I walk
these waves,
Resisting! — breathe me upward, thou
in me.
Aspiring, who art the way, the truth,
the life,—
That no truth henceforth seem indifferent,
No way to truth laborious, and no
life,
Not even this life I live, intolerable!

The days went by. I took up the old
days,
With all their Tuscan pleasures worn
and spoiled,
Like some lost book we dropt in the
long grass
On such a happy summer after-
noon,
When last we read it with a loving
friend,
And find in autumn, when the friend
is gone,
The grass cut short, the weather
changed, too late,
And stare at, as at something won-
derful,
For sorrow, thinking how two hands
before
Had held up what is left to only one,
And how we smiled when such a
vehement nail
Impressed the tiny dint here which
presents.
This verse in fire forever. Tenderly
And mournfully I lived. I knew the
birds

And insects, which looked fathered
by the flowers
And envious of their hues; I recog-
nized
The moths, with that great overpoise
of wings
Which make a mystery of them how
at all
They can stop flying; butterflies, that
bear
Upon their blue wings such red em-
bers round,
They seem to scorch the blue air into
holes
Each flight they take; and fireflies,
that suspirie
In short soft lapses of transported
flame
Across the tinkling dark, while over-
head
The constant and inviolable stars
Outburn those lights-of-love; melodious
owls,
(If music had but one note and was
sad,
'Twould sound just so), and all the
silent swirl
Of bats that seem to follow in the air
Some grand circumference of a shad-
owy dome
To which we are blind; and then the
nightingales,
Which pluck our heart across a gar-
den-wall,
(When walking in the town) and
carry it
So high into the bowery almond-
trees
We tremble and are afraid, and feel
as if
The golden flood of moonlight un-
aware
Dissolved the pillars of the steady
earth
And made it less substantial. And I
knew
The harmless opal snakes, the large-
mouthed frogs,
(Those noisy vaunters of their shal-
low streams)
And lizards, the green lightnings of
the wall,
Which, if you sit down quiet, nor
sigh loud,
Will flatter you, and take you for a
stone.
And flash familiarly about your feet
With such prodigious eyes in such
small heads! —

I knew them (though they had somewhat dwindled from my childish imagery), and kept in mind
 How last I sate among them equally, in fellowship and mateship, as a child
 Feels equal still toward insect, beast, and bird,
 Before the Adam in him has foregone all privilege of Eden, making friends
 And talk with such a bird or such a goat,
 And buying many a two-inch-wide rush-cage.
 To let out the caged cricket on a tree, saying, "Oh, my dear grillino, were you cramped?
 And are you happy with the ilex-leaves?
 And do you love me who have let you go?
 Say yes in singing, and I'll understand."
 But now the creatures all seemed farther off,
 No longer mine, nor like me; only there,
 A gulf between us. I could yearn, indeed,
 Like other rich men, for a drop of dew
 To cool this heat,—a drop of the early dew,
 The irrecoverable child-innocence (Before the heart took fire and withered life)
 When childhood might pair equally with birds;
 But now . . . the birds were grown too proud for us,
 Alas! the very sun forbids the dew.
 And I—I had come back to an empty nest,
 Which every bird's too wise for. How I heard
 My father's step on that deserted ground,
 His voice along that silence, as he told
 The names of bird and insect, tree and flower,
 And all the presentations of the stars
 Across Valdarno, interposing still
 "My child," "my child." When fathers say, "My child,"

'Tis easier to conceive the universe,
 And life's transitions down the steps of law.
 I rode once to the little mountain-house
 As fast as if to find my father there;
 But when in sight of't, within fifty yards,
 I dropped my horse's bridle on his neck,
 And paused upon his flank. The house's front
 Was cased with lingots of ripe Indian corn
 In tessellated order and device
 Of golden patterns, not a stone of wall
 Uncovered, not an inch of room to grow
 A vine-leaf. The old porch had disappeared,
 And right in the open doorway sate a girl
 At plaiting straws, her black hair strained away
 To a scarlet kerchief caught beneath her chin
 In Tuscan fashion, her full ebon eyes,
 Which looked too heavy to be lifted so,
 Still dropt and lifted toward the mulberry-tree,
 On which the lads were busy with their staves
 In shout and laughter, stripping every bough,
 As bare as winter, of those summer leaves
 My father had not changed for all the silk
 In which the ugly silkworms hide themselves.
 Enough. My horse recoiled before my heart.
 I turned the rein abruptly. Back we went
 As fast, to Florence. That was trial enough
 Of graves. I would not visit, if I could,
 My father's, or my mother's any more,
 To see if stone-cutter or lichen beat so early in the race, or throw my flowers,
 Which could not out-smell heaven, or sweeten earth.

They live too far above, that I should look
 So far below to find them: let me think
 That rather they are visiting my grave,
 Called life here, (undeveloped yet to life)
 And that they drop upon me now and then,
 For token or for solace, some small weed
 Least odorous of the growths of paradise,
 To spare such pungent scents as kill with joy.

My old Assunta, too, was dead,—
 was dead.
 O land of all men's past! for me alone
 It would not mix its tenses. I was past,
 It seemed, like others,—only not in heaven.
 And many a Tuscan eve I wandered down
 The cypress alley like a restless ghost
 That tries its feeble, ineffectual breath
 Upon its own charred funeral-brands put out
 Too soon, where black and stiff stood up the trees
 Against the broad vermillion of the skies,
 Such skies! —all clouds abolished in a sweep
 Of God's skirt, with a dazzle to ghosts and men,
 As down I went, saluting on the bridge
 The hem of such before 'twas caught away
 Beyond the peaks of Lucca. Underneath,
 The river, just escaping from the weight
 Of that intolerable glory, ran
 In acquiescent shadow murmurously;
 While up beside it strained the festa-folk
 With fellow-murmurs from their feet and fans,
 And *issimo* and *ino* and sweet poiso
 Of vowels in their pleasant, scandalous talk;
 Returning from the grand-duke's dairy-farm

Before the trees grew dangerous at eight,
 (For "trust no tree by moonlight," Tuscans say)
 To eat their ice at Donay's tenderly,
 Each lovely lady close to a cavalier
 Who holds her dear fan while she feeds her smile
 On meditative spoonfuls of vanille,
 And listens to his hot-breathed vows of love,
 Enough to thaw her cream, and scorch his beard.

'Twas little matter. I could pass them by
 Indifferently, not fearing to be known.
 No danger of being wrecked upon a friend,
 And forced to take an iceberg for an isle!
 The very English here must wait, and learn
 To hang the cobweb of their gossip out
 To catch a fly. I'm happy. It's sub-lime,
 This perfect solitude of foreign lands!
 To be as if you had not been till then,
 And were then, simply that you chose to be;
 To spring up, not be brought forth from the ground,
 Like grasshoppers at Athens, and skip thrice
 Before a woman makes a pounce on you
 And plants you in her hair! — possess, yourself,
 A new world all alive with creatures new,—
 New sun, new moon, new flowers, new people—ah,
 And be possessed by none of them! no right
 In one to call your name, inquire your where,
 Or what you think of Mister Someone's book,
 Or Mister Other's marriage or decease,
 Or how's the headache which you had last week,
 Or why you look so pale still, since it's gone.
 —Such most surprising riddance of one's life

Comes next one's death: 'tis disem-
bodiment
Without the pang. I marvel people
choose
To stand stock-still, like fakirs, till
the moss
Grows on them and they cry out,
self-admired,
"How verdant and how virtuous!"
Well, I'm glad,
Or should be, if grown foreign to my-
self
As surely as to others.

Musing so,
I walked the narrow, unrecognizing
streets,
Where many a palace-front peers
gloomily
Through stony visors iron-barred,
(prepared)
Alike, should foe or lover pass that
way,
For guest or victim) and came wan-
dering out
Upon the churches with mild open
doors
And plaintive wail of vespers, where
a few,
Those chiefly women, sprinkled
round in blots
Upon the dusky pavement, knelt and
prayed
Toward the altar's silver glory. Oft
a ray
(I liked to sit and watch) would trem-
ble out,
Just touch some face more lifted,
more in need.
(Of course a woman's) while I dreamed
a tale
To fit its fortunes. There was one
who looked
As if the earth had suddenly grown
too large
For such a little humpbacked thing
as she;
The pitiful black kerchief round her
neck
Sole proof she had had a mother.
One, again,
Looked sick for love, seemed pray-
ing some soft saint
To put more virtue in the new, fine
scarf
She spent a fortnight's meals on yes-
terday,
That cruel Gigi might return his eyes
From Giuliana. There was one, so
old,

So old, to kneel grew easier than to
stand;
So solitary, she accepts at last
Our Lady for her gossip, and frets
on
Against the sinful world which goes
its rounds
In marrying and being married, just
the same
As when 'twas almost good and had
the right,
(Her Gian alive and she herself eigh-
teen).
"And yet, now even, if Madonna
willed,
She'd win a term in Thursday's lot-
tery,
And better all things. Did she dream
for nought,
That, boiling cabbage for the fast-
day's soup,
It smelt like blessed entrails? such a
dream
For nought? would sweetest Mary
cheat her so,
And lose that certain candle, straight
and white
As any fair grand-duchess in her
teens,
Which otherwise should flaro here in
a week?
Benigna sis, thou beauteous Queen of
heaven!"

I sat there musing, and imagining
Such utterance from such faces, poor
blind souls
That writhed toward heaven along the
Devil's trail:
Who knows, I thought, but he may
stretch his hand
And pick them up? 'Tis written in
the Book
He heareth the young ravens when
they cry,
And yet they cry for carrion. O my
God!
And we who make excuses for the
rest,
We do it in our measure. Then I
knelt,
And dropped my head upon the pave-
ment too,
And prayed—since I was foolish in
desire
Like other creatures, craving offal-
food—
That he would stop his ears to what I
said.

And only listen to the run and beat
Of this poor, passionate, helpless
blood —

And then
I lay, and spoke not; but he heard in
heaven.

So many Tuscan evenings passed the
same.
I could not lose a sunset on the
bridge,
And would not miss a vigil in the
church,
And like to mingle with the out-
door crowd,
So strange and gay, and ignorant of
my face;
For men you know not are as good as
trees.

And only once, at the Santissima,
I almost chanced upon a man I knew,
Sir Blaise Delorme. He saw me cer-
tainly,
And somewhat hurried, as he crossed
himself,
The smoothness of the action; then
half bowed,
But only half, and merely to my
shade,
I slipped so quick behind the porphyry
plinth,
And left him dubious if 'twas really I,
Or peradventure Satan's usual trick
To keep a mounting saint uncanon-
ized.

But he was safe for that time, and I
too:
The argent angels in the altar-flare
Absorbed his soul next moment. The
good man!
In England we were scarce acquaint-
ances,
That here in Florence he should keep
my thought
Beyond the image on his eye, which
came
And went: and yet his thought dis-
turbed my life;
For after that I oftener sat at home
On evenings, watching how they fined
themselves
With gradual conscience to a perfect
night,
Until the moon, diminished to a
curve,
Lay out there like a sickle for His
hand
Who cometh down at last to reap the
earth.

At such times ended seemed my
trade of verse:

I feared to jingle bells upon my robe
Before the four-faced silent cheru-
bin.
With God so near me, could I sing of
God?

I did not write, nor read, nor even
think,
But sate absorbed amid the quicken-
ing glooms,
Most like some passive broken lump
of salt
Dropt in by chance to a bowl of ceno-
mel,
To spoil the drink a little, and lose it-
self,
Dissolving slowly, slowly, until lost.

EIGHTH BOOK.

ONE eye it happened, when I sate
alone,
Alone, upon the terrace of my tower,
A book upon my knees to counterfeit
The reading that I never read at all,
While Marian, in the garden down
below,
Knelt by the fountain I could just hear
thrill
The drowsy silence of the exhausted
day,
And peeled a new fig from that purple
heap
In the grass beside her, turning out
the red
To feed her eager child, who sucked
at it
With vehement lips across a gap of
air,
As he stood opposite, face and curls
afame
With that last sun-ray, crying, "Give
me, give!"
And stamping with imperious baby-
feet,
(We're all born princes) something
startled me,—
The laugh of sad and innocent souls
that breaks
Abruptly, as if frightened at itself.
'Twas Marian laughed. I saw her
glance above
In sudden shame that I should hear
her laugh,

And straightway dropped my eyes
upon my book,
And knew, the first time, 'twas Boc-
caccio's tale,
The Falcon's, of the lover who for
love
Destroyed the best that loved him.
Some of us
Do it still, and then we sit, and laugh
no more.
Laugh *you*, sweet Marian, you've the
right to laugh,
Since God himself is for you, and a
child.
For me there's somewhat less, and so
I sigh.

The heavens were making room to
hold the night,
The sevenfold heavens unfolding all
their gates
To let the stars out slowly (proph-
esied
In close-approaching advent, not dis-
cerned),
While still the cue-owls from the cy-
presses
Of the Poggio called and counted
every pulse
Of the skyey palpitation. Gradu-
ally
The purple and transparent shadows
slow
Had filled up the whole valley to the
brim,
And flooded all the city, which you
saw
As some drowned city in some en-
chanted sea,
Cut off from nature, drawing you who
gaze,
With passionate desire, to leap and
plunge,
And find a sea-king with a voice of
waves,
And treacherous soft eyes, and slip-
pery locks
You cannot kiss but you shall bring
away
Their salt upon your lips. The duomo-
bell
Strikes ten, as if it struck ten fathoms
down,
So deep, and twenty churches answer
it
The same, with twenty various in-
stances.
Some gaslights tremble along squares
and streets;

The Pitti's palace-front is drawn in
fire;
And, past the quays, Maria Novella
Place,
In which the mystic obelisks stand
up
Triangular, pyramidal, each based
Upon its four-square brazen tortoises,
To guard that fair church, Buonarroti's Bride,
That stares out from her large blind
dial-eyes,
(Her quadrant and armillary dials,
black
With rhythms of many suns and
moons) in vain
Inquiry for so rich a soul as his.
Methinks I have plunged, I see it all
so clear . . .
And O my heart . . . the sea-king!

In my ears
The sound of waters. There he stood,
my king!
I felt him, rather than beheld him.
Up
I rose, as if he were my king indeed,
And then sate down, in trouble at
myself,
And struggling for my woman's em-
perty.
'Tis pitiful; but women are so made:
We'll die for you, perhaps, — 'tis
probable;
But we'll not spare you an inch of our
full height:
We'll have our whole just stature, —
five feet four,
Though laid out in our coffins: pitiful.
— "You, Romney! — Lady Waldemar
is here?"

He answered in a voice which was not
his.
"I have her letter: you shall read it
soon.
But first I must be heard a little, I
Who have waited long and travelled
far for that,
Although you thought to have shut a
tedious book,
And farewell. Ah, you dog-eared
such a page;
And here you find me."
Did he touch my hand,
Or but my sleeve? I trembled, hand
and foot:

He must have touched me. "Will you sit?" I asked, And motioned to a chair; but down he sat, A little slowly, as a man in doubt, Upon the couch beside me, couch and chair Being wheeled upon the terrace.

"You are come, My cousin Romney? This is wonderful. But all is wonder on such summer-nights; And nothing should surprise us any more, Who see that miracle of stars. Behold."

I signed above, where all the stars were out, As if an urgent heat had started there A secret writing from a sombre page, A blank last moment, crowded suddenly With hurrying splendors.

"Then you do not know"— He murmured. "Yes, I know," I said, "I know. I had the news from Vincent Carrington. And yet I did not think you'd leave the work In England for so much even,— though of course You'll make a work-day of your holiday, And turn it to our Tuscan people's use,— Who much need helping, since the Austrian boar (So bold to cross the Alp to Lombardy, And dash his brute front unabashed against The steep snow-bosses of that shield of God Who soon shall rise in wrath, and shake it clear) Came hither also, raking up our grape And olive gardens with his tyrannous tusk, And rolling on our maize with all his swine."

"You had the news from Vincent Carrington," He echoed, picking up the phrase beyond,

As if he knew the rest was merely talk To fill a gap and keep out a strong wind: "You had, then, Vincent's personal news?" "His own," I answered. "All that ruined world of yours Seems crumbling into marriage. Carrington Has chosen wisely."

"Do you take it so?" He cried, "and is it possible at last?" . . . He paused there, and then, inward to himself,— "Too much at last, too late! yet certainly" (And there his voice swayed as an Alpine plank That feels a passionate torrent underneath) "The knowledge, had I known it first or last, Could scarce have changed the actual case for me, And best for her at this time."

Nay, I thought, He loves Kate Ward, it seems, now, like a man, Because he has married Lady Waldeimar! Ah, Vincent's letter said how Leigh was moved To hear that Vincent was betrothed to Kate. With what cracked pitchers go we to deep wells In this world! Then I spoke,—"I did not think, My cousin, you had ever known Kate Ward."

"In fact I never knew her. 'Tis enough That Vincent did, and therefore chose his wife For other reasons than those topaz eyes We've heard of. Not to undervalue them, For all that. One takes up the world with eyes."

— Including Romney Leigh, I thought again, Albeit he knows them only by repute. How vile must all men be, since he's a man!

His deep pathetic voice, as if he
guessed
I did not surely love him, took the
word:

"You never got a letter from Lord
Howe
A month back, dear Aurora?"
"None," I said.

"I felt it was so," he replied. "Yet,
strange!
Sir Blaise Delorme has passed through
Florence?"

"Ay,
By chance I saw him in Our Lady's
Church, (I saw him, mark you; but he saw not
me)
Clean-washed in holy water from the
count
Of things terrestrial,—letters and
the rest:
He had crossed us out together with
his sins.
Ay, strange; but only strange that
good Lord Howe
Preferred him to the post because of
pauls.
For me, I'm sworn to never trust a
man—
At least with letters."

"There were facts to tell,
To smooth with eye and accent.
Howe supposed . . .
Well, well, no matter! there was
dubious need:
You heard the news from Vincent
Carrington.
And yet perhaps you had been star-
tled less
To see me, dear Aurora, if you had
read
That letter."

—Now he sets me down as vexed.
I think I've draped myself in wo-
man's pride
To a perfect purpose. Oh, I'm
vexed, it seems!
My friend Lord Howe deputes his
friend Sir Blaise
To break, as soft ly as a sparrow's egg
That lets a bird out tenderly, the
news
Of Romney's marriage to a certain
saint,
To smooth with eye and accent,—indi-
cate
His possible presence. Excellently
well

You've played your part, my Lady
Waldemar,—

As I've played mine.
"Dear Romney," I began,
"You did not use of old to be so
like
A Greek king coming from a taken
Troy

'Twas needful that precursors spread
your path
With three-piled carpets to receive
your foot,
And dull the sound of't. For myself,
be sure,
Although it frankly grinds the gravel
here,
I still can bear it. Yet I'm sorry, too,
To lose this famous letter, which Sir
Blaise

Has twisted to a lighter absently
To fire some holy taper. Dear Lord
Howe

Writes letters good for all things but
to lose:
And many a flower of London gos-
sipry
Has dropt wherever such a stem
broke off.
Of course I feel that, lonely among
my vines,
Where nothing's talked of, save the
blight again,
And no more Chianti! Still the let-
ter's use
As preparation . . . Did I start in-
deed?

Last night I started at a cockchafer,
And shook a half-hour after. Have
you learnt

No more of women, 'spite of privi-
lege,
Than still to take account too seri-
ously

Of such weak flutterings? Why, we
like it, sir:

We get our powers and our effects
that way.

The trees stand stiff and still at time
of frost,
If no wind tears them; but let sum-
mer come,
When trees are happy, and a breath
avails
To set them trembling through a mil-
lion leaves

In luxury of emotion. Something
less
It takes to move a woman: let her
start

And shake at pleasure, nor conclude
at yours,
The winter's bitter, but the summer's
green."

He answered, "Be the summer ever
green
With you, Aurora! though you sweep
your sex
With somewhat bitter gusts from
where you live
Above them, whirling downward
from your heights
Your very own pine-cones, in a grand
dissain
Of the lowland burrs with which you
scatter them.
So high and cold to others and yourself,
A little less to Romney were unjust;
And thus, I would not have you.
Let it pass:
I feel content so. You can bear, indeed,
My sudden step beside you: but for me,
'Twould move me sore to hear your
softened voice,—
Aurora's voice,—if softened unaware
In pity of what I am."

Ah, friend! I thought,
As husband of the Lady Waldemar
You're granted very sorely pitiable;
And yet Aurora Leigh must guard
her voice
From softening in the pity of your
case,
As if from lie or license. Certainly
We'll soak up all the slush and soil of
life
With softened voices, ere we come to
you.

At which I interrupted my own
thought,
And spoke out calmly. "Let us ponder, friend,
Whate'er our state, we must have
made it first;
And though the thing displease us,
ay, perhaps
Displease us warrantably, never
doubt
That other states, thought possible
once, and then
Rejected by the instinct of our lives,
If then adopted, had displeased us
more

Than this in which the choice, the
will, the love,
Has stamped the honor of a patent
act
From henceforth. What we choose
may not be good;
But that we choose it proves it good
for us
Potentially, fantastically, now
Or last year, rather than a thing we
saw,
And saw no need for choosing. Moths
will burn
Their wings,—which proves that
light is good for moths,
Who else had flown not where they
agonize."

"Ay, light is good," he echoed, and
there paused;
And then abruptly . . . "Marian.
Marian's well?"

I bowed my head, but found no word.
'Twas hard
To speak of her to Lady Waldemar's
New husband. How much did he
know, at last?
How much? how little? He would
take no sign,
But straight repeated,—"Marian. Is
she well?"

"She's well," I answered.

She was there in sight
An hour back; but the night had
drawn her home,
Where still I heard her in an upper
room,
Her low voice singing to the child in
bed,
Who, restless with the summer-heat
and play,
And slumber snatched at noon, was
long sometimes
In falling off, and took a score of
songs
And mother hushes ere she saw him
sound.

"She's well," I answered.
"Here?" he asked.
"Yes, here."

He stopped and sighed. "That shall
be presently;
But now this must be. I have words
to say,



"I'm thinking, Romney, how 'twas morning then
And now, 'tis night." — Page 147.

And would be alone to say them, I
with you,
And no third troubling."

" Speak, then," I returned,
" She will not vex you."

At which, suddenly
He turned his face upon me with its
smile,
As if to crush me. " I have read
your book,
Aurora."

" You have read it," I replied,
" And I have writ it—we have done
with it.

And now the rest?"

" The rest is like the first,"
He answered, " for the book is in my
heart,
Lives in me, wakes in me, and dreams
in me:
My daily bread tastes of it; and my
wine
Which has no smack of it,—I pour it
out,
It seem unnatural drinking."

Bitterly
I took the word up: " Never waste
your wine.
The book lived in me ere it lived in
you;
I know it closer than another does,
And how it's foolish, feeble, and
afraid,
And all unworthy so much compli-
ment.
Beseech you, keep your wine, and,
when you drink,
Still wish some happier fortune to a
friend
Than even to have written a far better
book."

He answered gently: " That is conse-
quent.
Tho' poet looks beyond the book he
has made,
Or else he had not made it. If a man
Could make a man, he'd henceforth
be a god
In feeling what a little thing is man:
It is not my case. And this special
book,
I did not make it, to make light of it:
It stands above my knowledge, draws
me up;
Tis high to me. It may be that the

Is not so high, but I so low, instead;
Still high to me. I mean no compli-
ment:

I will not say there are not, young or
old,
Male writers, ay, or female, let it
pass,
Who'll write us richer and completer
books.

A man may love a woman perfectly,
And yet by no means ignorantly
maintain

A thousand women have not larger
eyes:
Enough that she alone has looked at
him
With eyes that, large or small, have
won his soul.
And so, this book, Aurora,—so, your
book."

" Alas!" I answered, " is it so, in-
deed?"
And then was silent.

" Is it so, indeed,"
He echoed, " that *alas* is all your
word?"
I said, " I'm thinking of a far-off
June,
When you and I, upon my birthday,
once,
Discoursed of life and art, with both
untried.
I'm thinking, Romney, how 'twas
morning then,
And now 'tis night."

" And now," he said, " 'tis night."

" I'm thinking," I resumed, "'tis
somewhat sad,
That if I had known, that morning in
the dew,
My cousin Romney would have said
such words
On such a night at close of many
years,
In speaking of a future book of mine,
It would have pleased me better as a
hope
Than as an actual grace it can at
all:

That's sad, I'm thinking."
" Ay," he said, " 'tis night."

" And there," I added lightly, " are
the stars;
And here we'll talk of stars, and not
of books."

" You have the stars," he murmured,
— it is well :
Be like them. Shine, Aurora, on my
dark,
Though high and cold, and only like a
star,
And for this short night only,— you
who keep
The same Aurora of the bright June
day
That withered up the flowers before
my face,
And turned me from the garden ever-
more,
Because I was not worthy. Oh, de-
served,
Deserved ! that I, who verily had not
learnt
God's lesson half, attaining as a dunce
To obliterate good words with frac-
tious thumbs,
And cheat myself of the context,—
I should push
Aside, with male ferocious impudence,
The world's Aurora, who had conned
her part
On the other side the leaf ! ignore her
so,
Because she was a woman and a
queen,
And had no beard to bristle through
her song,
My teacher, who has taught me with
a book,
My Miriam, whose sweet mouth, when
nearly drowned,
I still heard singing on the shore !
Deserved,
That here I should look up unto the
stars,
And miss the glory" . . .
" Can I understand ?"
I broke in. " You speak wildly,
Romney Leigh,
Or I hear wildly. In that morning-
time
We recollect, the roses were too red,
The trees too green, reproach too nat-
ural
If one should see not what the other
saw :
And now it's night, remember ; we
have shades
In place of colors ; we are now grown
cold
And old, my cousin Romney. Pardon
me,—
I'm very happy that you like my book,
And very sorry that I quoted back

A ten-years' birthday. 'Twas so mad
a thing
In any woman, I scarce marvel much
You took it for a venturous piece of
spite,
Provoking such excuses as indeed
I cannot call you slack in."
" Understand,"
He answered sadly, " something, if
but so.
This night is softer than an English
day,
And men may well come hither when
they're sick,
To draw in easier breath from larger
air.
'Tis thus with me : I come to you,—
to you,
My Italy of women, just to breathe
My soul out once before you, ere I
go,
As humble as God makes me at the
last,
(I thank him) quite out of the way of
men,
And yours, Aurora, — like a punished
child,
His cheeks all blurred with tears and
naughtiness,
To silence in a corner. I am come
To speak, beloved" . . .
" Wisely, cousin Leigh,
And worthily of us both."
" Yes, worthily ;
For this time I must speak out, and
confess
That I, so trueulent in assumption
once,
So absolute in dogma, proud in aim,
And fierce in expectation, — I, who
felt
The whole world tugging at my skirts
for help,
As if no other man than I could pull,
Nor woman, but I led her by the hand,
Nor cloth hold, but I had it in my
coat,—
Do know myself to-night for what I
was
On that June-day, Aurora. Poor
bright day,
Which meant the best . . . a woman
and a rose,
And which I smote upon the cheek
with words,
Until it turned and rent me. Young
you were,
That birthday, poet ; but you talked
the right :

While I . . . I built up follies, like a
wall,
To intercept the sunshine and your
face.
Your face! that's worse."

" Speak wisely, cousin Leigh."

" Yes, wisely, dear Aurora, though too
late,
But then, not wisely. I was heavy
then,
And stupid, and distracted with the
cries
Of tortured prisoners in the polished
brass
Of that Phalarian bull, society,
Which seems to bellow bravely like
ten bulls,
But, if you listen, moans and cries
instead
Despairingly, like victims tossed and
gored
And trampled by their hoofs. I heard
the cries
Too close : I could not hear the angels
lift
A fold of rustling air, nor what they
said
To help my pity. I beheld the
world
As one great fainting carnivorous
mouth,—
A huge, deserted, callow, blind bird
thing,
With piteous open beak that hurt my
heart,
Till down upon the filthy ground I
dropped,
And tore the violets up to get the
worms.
Worms, worms, was all my cry: an
open mouth,
A gross want, bread to fill it to the
lips,
No more. That poor men narrowed
their demands
To such an end was virtue, I sup-
posed,
Adjudicating that to see it so
Was reason. Oh, I did not push the
case
Up higher, and ponder how it answers
when
The rich take up the same cry for
themselves,
Professing equally,— ' An open
mouth
A gross need, food to fill us, and no
more.'

Why, that's so far from virtue, only
vice
Can find excuse for't! that makes
libertines,
And slurs our cruel streets from end
to end
With eighty thousand women in one
smile,
Who only smile at night beneath the
gas.
The body's satisfaction, and no
more,
Is used for argument against the
soul's,
Here too: the want, here too, implies
the right.
— How dark I stood that morning in
the sun,
My best Aurora (though I saw your
eyes)
When first you told me . . . oh, I
recollect
The sound, and how you lifted your
small hand,
And how your white dress and your
burnished curls
Went greatening round you in the
still blue air,
As if an inspiration from within
Had blown them all out when you
spoke the words,
Even these,— You will not compass
your poor ends
Of barley-feeding and material ease
Without the poet's individualism
To work your universal. It takes a
soul
To move a body; it takes a high-
souled man
To move the masses even to a
cleaner sty;
It takes the ideal to blow an inch in-
side
The dust of the actual; and your
Fouriers failed,
Because not poets enough to under-
stand
That life develops from within.' I
say
Your words: I could say other
words of yours;
For none of all your words will let
me go,
Like sweet verbena, which, being
brushed against,
Will hold us three hours after by the
smell,
In spite of long walks upon windy
hills.

But these words dealt in sharper perfume; these
Were ever on me, stinging through my dreams,
And saying themselves forever o'er my acts
Like some unhappy verdict. That I failed
Is certain. Sty or no sty, to contrive
The swine's propulsion toward the precipice
Proved easy and plain. I subtly organized
And ordered, built the cards up high and higher,
Till, some one breathing, all fell flat again:
In setting right society's wide wrong,
Mere life's so fatal! So I failed indeed
Once, twice, and oftener, hearing through the rents
Of obstinate purpose, still those words of yours,—
'You will not compass your poor ends, not you!'
But harder than you said them; every time
Still farther from your voice, until they came
To overcrow me with triumphant scorn,
Which vexed me to resistance. Set down this
For condemnation. I was guilty here;
I stood upon my deed, and fought my doubt,
As men will,—for I doubted,—till at last
My deed gave way beneath me suddenly,
And left me what I am. The curtain dropped,
My part quite ended, all the foot-lights quenched,
My own soul hissing at me through the dark,
I ready for confession,—I was wrong,
I've sorely failed, I've slipped the ends of life,
I yield: you have conquered.”
“Stay,” I answered him:
“I've something for your hearing, also. I
Have failed too.”
“You!” he said, “you're very great:
The sadness of your greatness fits you well,

As if the plume upon a hero's casque
Should nod a shadow upon his victor's face.”
I took him up austerely,—“ You have read
My book, but not my heart; for, recollect,
'Tis writ in Sanscrit, which you bungle at.
I've surely failed, I know, if failure means
To look back sadly on work gladly done,
To wander on my Mountains of Delight,
So called, (I can remember a friend's words
As well as you, sir) weary, and in want
Of even a sheep-path, thinking bitterly . . .
Well, well! no matter. I but say so much,
To keep you, Ronney Leigh, from saying more,
And let you feel I am not so high indeed,
That I can bear to have you at my foot,
Or safe, that I can help you. That June day,
Too deeply sunk in craterous sunsets now
For you or me to dig it up alive;
To pluck it out all bleeding with spent flame
At the roots, before those moralizing stars
We have got instead,—that poor lost day, you said
Some words as truthful as the thing of mine
You cared to keep in memory; and I hold
If I that day, and being the girl I was,
Had shown a gentler spirit, less arrogance,
It had not hurt me. You will scarce mistake
The point here. I but only think, you see,
More justly, that's more humbly of myself,
Than when I tried a crown on, and supposed . . .
Nay, laugh, sir,—I'll laugh with you! —pray you laugh.

I've had so many birthdays since that day,
 I've learnt to prize mirth's opportunities,
 Which come too seldom. Was it you who said
 I was not changed? the same Aurora? Ah,
 We could laugh there too! Why, Ulysses' dog
 Knew him and wagged his tail and died; but if
 I had owned a dog, I too, before my Troy,
 And if you brought him here . . . I warrant you
 He'd look into my face, bark lustily,
 And live on stoutly, as the creatures will
 Whose spirits are not troubled by long loves.
 A dog would never know me, I'm so changed,
 Much less a friend . . . except that you're misled
 By the color of the hair, the trick of the voice,
 Like that Aurora Leigh's."

"Sweet trick of voice!
 I would be a dog for this, to know it at last,
 And die upon the falls of it. O love,
 O best Aurora! are you then so sad
 You scarcely had been sadder as my wife?"

"Your wife, sir! I must certainly be changed,
 If I, Aurora, can have said a thing
 So light, it catches at the knightly spurs
 Of a noble gentleman like Romney Leigh,
 And trips him from his honorable sense
 Of what befits" . . .
 "You wholly misconceive,"
 He answered.

I returned, — "I'm glad of it.
 But keep from misconception, too, yourself:
 I am not humbled to so low a point,
 Nor so far saddened. If I am sad at all,
 Ten layers of birthdays on a woman's head
 Are apt to fossilize her girlish mirth,
 Though ne'er so merry: I'm perforce more wise,

And that, in truth, means sadder.
 For the rest,
 Look here, sir: I was right, upon the whole,
 That birthday morning. 'Tis impossible
 To get at men excepting through their souls,
 However open their carnivorous jaws;
 And poets get directlier at the soul
 Than any of your economists; for which
 You must not overlook the poet's work
 When scheming for the world's necessities.
 The soul's the way. Not even Christ himself
 Can save man else than as he holds man's soul;
 And therefore did he come into our flesh,
 As some wise hunter, creeping on his knees
 With a torch, into the blackness of a cave,
 To face and quell the beast there,— take the soul,
 And so possess the whole man, body and soul.
 I said, so far, right, yes; not farther, though:
 We both were wrong that June day,
 —both as wrong
 As an east wind had been. I who talked of art,
 And you who grieved for all men's griefs . . . what then?
 We surely made too small a part for God
 In these things. What we are imports us more
 Than what we eat; and life, you've granted me,
 Develops from within. But innermost
 Of the inmost, most interior of the interne,
 God claims his own, divine humanity
 Renewing nature; or the piercingest verse,
 Prest in by subtlest poet still must keep
 As much upon the outside of a man
 As the very bowl in which he dips his beard.
 —And then . . . the rest; I cannot surely speak:

Perhaps I doubt more than you
doubted then,
If I the poet's veritable charge
Have borne upon my forehead. If I
have,
It might feel somewhat liker to a
crown,
The foolish green one, even. Ah, I
think,
And chiefly when the sun shines, that
I've failed.
But what then, Romney? Though
we fail indeed,
You . . . I . . . a score of such weak
workers . . . He
Fails never. If he cannot work by
us,
He will work over us. Does he want
a man,
Much less a woman, think you?
Every time
The star winks there, so many souls
are born,
Who all shall work too. Let our own
be calm:
We should be ashamed to sit beneath
those stars,
Impatient that we're nothing."

"Could we sit
Just so forever, sweetest friend," he
said,
"My failure would seem better than
success.
And yet indeed your book has dealt
with me
More gently, cousin, than you ever
will.
Your book brought down entire the
bright June day,
And set me wandering in the garden-
walks,
And let me watch the garland in a
place
You blushed so . . . nay, forgive me,
do not stir;
I only thank the book for what it
taught,
And what permitted. Poet doubt
yourself,
But never doubt that you're a poet to
me
From henceforth. You have written
poems, sweet,
Which moved me in secret, as the sap
is moved
In still March branches, signless as a
stone;
But this last book o'ercame me like
soft rain

Which falls at midnight, when the
tightened bark
Breaks out into unhesitating buds,
And sudden protestations of the
spring.
In all your other books I saw but
you.
A man may see the moon so, in a
pond,
And not be nearer therefore to the
moon,
Nor use the sight . . . except to
drown himself:
And so I forced my heart back from
the sight,
For what had I, I thought, to do with
her,
Aurora . . . Romney? But in this
last book
You showed me something separate
from yourself,
Beyond you, and I bore to take it in,
And let it draw me. You have shown
me truths,
O June-day friend, that help me now
at night
When June is over,— truths not yours,
indeed,
But set within my reach by means of
you,
Presented by your voice and verse
the way
To take them clearest. Verily I was
wrong;
And verily many thinkers of this age,
Ay, many Christian teachers, half in
heaven,
Are wrong in just my sense who under-
stood
Our natural world too insularly, as if
No spiritual counterpart completed it,
Consummating its meaning, rounding
all
To justice and perfection, line by
line,
Form by form, nothing single nor
alone,
The great below clinched by the
great above,
Shade here authenticating substance
there,
The body proving spirit, as the effect
The cause; we meantime being too
grossly apt
To hold the natural, as dogs a bone,
(Though reason and nature beat us in
the face)
So obstinately that we'll break our
teeth

Or ever we let go. For everywhere
We're too materialistic, eating clay,
(Like men of the west) instead of
Adam's corn
And Noah's wine,—clay by handfuls,
clay by lumps,
Until we're filled up to the throat
with clay,
And grow the grimy color of the
ground
On which we are feeding. Ay, mate-
rialist
The age's name is. God himself, with
some,
Is apprehended as the bare result
Of what his hand materially has
made,
Expressed in such an algebraic sign
Called God; that is, to put it other-
wise,
They add up nature to a nought of
God,
And cross the quotient. There are
many even,
Whose names are written in the
Christian church.
To no dishonor, diet still on mud,
And splash the altars with it.. You
might think
The clay Christ laid upon their eye-
lids, when,
Still blind, he called them to the use
of sight,
Remained there to retard its exer-
cise
With clogging incrustations. Close
to heaven,
They see for mysteries, through the
open doors,
Vague puffs of smoke from pots of
earthenware,
And fain would enter, when their
time shall come,
With quite another body than St.
Paul
Has promised,—husk and chaff, the
whole barley-corn,
Or where's the resurrection?"

"Thus it is,"
I sighed. And he resumed with
mournful face.
"Beginning so, and filling up with
clay
The wards of this great key, the natu-
ral world,
And fumbling vainly therefore at the
lock
Of the spiritual, we feel ourselves
shut in

With all the wild-beast roar of strug-
gling life,
The terrors and compunctions of our
souls,
As saints with lions,—we who are
not saints,
And have no heavenly lordship in
our stare
To awe them backward. Ay, we are
forced, so pent,
To judge the whole too partially . . .
confound
Conclusions. Is there any common
phrase
Significant, with the adverb heard
alone,
The verb being absent, and the pro-
noun out?
But we, distracted in the roar of
life,
Still insolently at God's adverb
snatch,
And bruit against him that his thought
is void,
His meaning hopeless,—cry, that
everywhere
The government is slipping from his
hand,
Unless some other Christ (say Rom-
ney Leigh)
Come up and toil and moil and change
the world,
Because the First has proved inade-
quate,
However we talk bigly of his work
And piously of his person. We blas-
phemers
At last, to finish our doxology,
Despairing on the earth for which he
died."

"So now," I asked, "you have more
hope of men?"

"I hope," he answered. "I am come
to think
That God will have his work done, as
you said,
And that we need not be disturbed
too much
For Romney Leigh or others having
failed
With this or that quack nostrum,—
recipes
For keeping summits by annulling
depths,
For wrestling with luxurious loun-
ging sleeves,
And acting heroism without a scratch.

We fail,—what then? Aurora, if I
smiled
To see you, in your lovely mornjng-
pride,
Try on the poet's wreath which suits
the noon,
(Sweet cousin, walls must get the
weather-stain
Before they grow the ivy) certainly
I stood myself there worthier of con-
tempt,
Self rated, in disastrous arrogance,
As competent to sorrow for mankind
And even their odds. A man may
well despair,
Who counts himself so needful to
success.
I failed: I throw the remedy back on
God,
And sit down here beside you, in
good hope."

"And yet take heed," I answered,
"lest we lean
Too dangerously on the other side,
And so fail twice. Be sure, no ear-
nest work
Of any honest creature, howbeit
weak,
Imperfect, ill-adapted, fails so much
It is not gathered as a grain of sand
To enlarge the sum of human action
used
For carrying out God's end. No crea-
ture works
So ill, observe, that therefore he's
cashiered.
The honest earnest man must stand
and work,
The woman also: otherwise she
drops
At once below the dignity of man,
Accepting serv'dom. Free men freely
work.
Whoever fears God fears to sit at
ease."

He cried, "True. After Adam, work
was curse:
The natural creature labors, sweats,
and frets.
But, after Christ, work turns to privi-
lege,
And henceforth, one with our human-
ity,
The Six-day Worker, working still in
us,
Has called us freely to work on with
him

In high companionship. So, hap-
piest!
I count that heaven itself is only
work
To a surer issue. Let us work, in-
deed,
But no more work as Adam, nor as
Leigh
Erewhile, as if the only man on
earth,
Responsible for all the thistles blown,
And tigers couchant, struggling in
amaze
Against disease and winter, snarling
on
Forever that the world's not para-
dise.
O cousin, let us be content, in work,
To do the thing we can, and not pre-
sumo
To fret because it's little. 'Twill em-
ploy
Seven men they say to make a per-
fect pin;
Who makes the head, content to miss
the point;
Who makes the point, agreed to leave
the join:
And if a man should cry, 'I want a
pin,
And I must make it straightway,
head and point,'
His wisdom is not worth the pin he
wants.
Seven men to a pin, and not a man
too much.
Seven generations, haply, to this
world,
To right it visibly a finger's breadth,
And mend its rents a little. Oh, to
storm
And say, 'This world here is intolera-
ble;
I will not eat this corn, nor drink this
wine,
Nor love this woman, flinging her my
soul
Without a bond for't as a lover
should,
Nor use the generous leave of happi-
ness
As not too good for using generous-
ly'—
(Since virtue kindles at the touch of
joy,
Like a man's cheek laid on a woman's
hand,
And God, who knows it, looks for
quick returns

From joys)—to stand and claim to have a life
 Beyond the bounds of the individual man,
 And raze all personal cloisters of the soul
 To build up public stores and magazines,
 As if God's creatures otherwise were lost,
 The builder surely saved by any means!
 To think,—I have a pattern on my nail,
 And I will carve the world new after it,
 And solve so these hard social questions, nay,
 Impossible social questions, since their roots
 Strike deep in evil's own existence here,
 Which God permits because the question's hard
 To abolish evil nor attain free-will.
 Ay, hard to God, but not to Romney Leigh;
 For Romney has a pattern on his nail
 (Whatever may be lacking on the Mount),
 And, not being overnice to separate
 What's element from what's convention,
 By line on line to draw you out a world,
 Without your help indeed, unless you take
 His yoke upon you, and will learn of him;
 So much he has to teach!—so good a world,
 The same the whole creation's groaning for!
 No rich nor poor, no gain nor loss nor stint,
 No pottage in it able to exclude
 A brother's birthright, and no right of birth,
 The pottage,—both secured to every man,
 And perfect virtue dealt out like the rest
 Gratuitously, with the soup at six,
 To whoso does not seek it.”

“Softly, sir,” I interrupted. “I had a cousin once I held in reverence. If he strained too wide,

It was not to take honor, but give help.
 The gesture was heroic. If his hand Accomplished nothing . . . (well, it is not proved)
 That empty hand thrown impotently out
 Were sooner caught, I think, by One in heaven,
 Than many a hand that reaped a harvest in
 And keeps the scythe's glow on it.
 Pray you, then,
 For my sake merely, use less bitterness
 In speaking of my cousin.”

“Ah,” he said, “Aurora! when the prophet beats the ass,
 The angel intercedes.” He shook his head.
 “And yet to mean so well, and fail so foul,
 Expresses ne'er another beast than man:
 The antithesis is human. Harken, dear:
 There's too much abstract willing, purposing,
 In this poor world. We talk by aggregates,
 And think by systems, and, being used to face
 Our evils in statistics, are inclined To cap them with unreal remedies Drawn out in haste on the other side the slate.”

“That's true,” I answered, fain to throw up thought, And make a game of't. “Yes, we generalize Enough to please you. If we pray at all, We pray no longer for our daily bread, But next centenary's harvests. If we give, Our cup of water is not tendered till We lay down pipes and found a company With branches. Ass or angel, 'tis the same: A woman cannot do the thing she ought, Which means whatever perfect thing she can, In life, in art, in science, but she fears

To let the perfect action take her part,
And rest there: she must prove what she can do
Before she does it, prate of woman's rights,
Of woman's mission, woman's function, till
The men (who are prating too on their side) cry,
'A woman's function plainly is . . . to talk.'
Poor souls, they are very reasonably vexed:
They cannot hear each other talk."

"And you, An artist, judge so?"

"I, an artist, yes. Because, precisely, I'm an artist, sir, And woman, if another sate in sight, I'd whisper, —'Soft, my sister! not a word!' By speaking we prove only we can speak, Which he, the man here, never doubted. What He doubts is, whether we can do the thing With decent grace we've not yet done at all. Now, do it: bring your statue, —you have room! He'll see it even by the starlight here; And if 'tis ere so little like the god Who looks out from the marble silently Along the track of his own shining dart Through the dusk of ages, there's no need to speak: The universe shall henceforth speak for you, And witness, "She who did this thing was born To do it, —claims her license in her work."

And so with more works. Whoso cures the plague, Though twice a woman, shall be called a leech; Who rights a land's finances is excused For touching coppers, though her hands be white, — But we, we talk!"

"It is the age's mood." He said: "we boast, and do not. We put up

Hostelry signs where'er we lodge & day,
Some red colossal cow with mighty paps
A Cyclops' fingers could not strain to milk,
Then bring out presently our saucerful
Of curls. We want more quiet in our works,
More knowledge of the bounds in which we work,
More knowledge that each individual man Remains an Adam to the general race,
Constrained to see, like Adam, that he keep His personal state's condition honestly,
Or vain all thoughts of his to help the world,
Which still must be developed from its one,
If bettered in its many. We indeed, Who think to lay it out new like a park, — We take a work on us which is not man's; For God alone sits far enough above To speculate so largely. None of us (Not Romney Leigh) is mad enough to say, We'll have a grove of oaks upon that slope, And sink the need of acorns. Government, If veritable and lawful, is not given By imposition of the foreign hand, Nor chosen from a pretty pattern-book Of some domestic ideologue who sits And coldly chooses empire, where as well He might republic. Genuine government Is but the expression of a nation, good Or less good, even as all society, How'er unequal, monstrous, crazed, and cursed, Is but the expression of men's single lives, The loud sum of the silent units. What, We'd change the aggregate, and yet retain Each separate figure? whom do we cheat by that? Now, not even Romney."

"Cousin, you are sad.

Did all your social labor at Leigh Hall
And elsewhere come to nought, then?"
It was nought,"
He answered mildly. "There is room indeed
For statues still, in this large world of God's,
But not for vacuums: so I am not sad,—
Not sadder than is good for what I am.
My vain phalanstery dissolved itself;
My men and women of disordered lives,
I brought in orderly to dine and sleep,
Broke up those waxen masks I made them wear,
With fierce contortions of the natural face,
And cursed me for my tyrannous constraint
In forcing crooked creatures to live straight,
And set the country hounds upon my back
To bite and tear me for my wicked deed
Of trying to do good without the church,
Or even the squires, Aurora. Do you mind
Your ancient neighbors? The great book-club teens
With 'sketches,' 'summaries,' and 'last tracts,' but twelve,
On socialistic troublers of close bonds
Betwixt the generous rich and grateful poor.
The vicar preached from 'Revelation,' (till
The doctor woke) and found me with 'the frogs'
On three successive Sundays; ay, and stopped
To weep a little (for he's getting old)
That such perdition should o'ertake a man
Of such fair acres,—in the parish, too!
He printed his discourses 'by request,'
And, if your book shall sell as his did, then
Your verses are less good than I suppose.
The women of the neighborhood subscribed,

And sent me a copy bound in scarlet silk,
Tooled edges, blazoned with the arms of Leigh:
I own that touched me."
"What, the pretty ones?
Poor Romney!"
"Otherwise the effect was small.
I had my windows broken once or twice
By liberal peasants naturally incensed
At such a vexer of Arcadian peace,
Who would not let men call their wives their own
To kick like Britons, and made obstacles
When things went smoothly, as a baby drugged,
Toward freedom and starvation, bringing down
The wicked London tavern-thieves and drabs
To affront the blessed hillside drabs and thieves
With mended morals, quotha,—fine new lives!—
My windows paid for't. I was shot at, once,
By an active poacher who had hit a hare
From the other barrel, (tired of springeing game)
So long upon my acres, undisturbed,
And restless for the country's virtue; yet
He missed me) ay, and pelted very oft
In riding through the village. 'There he goes,
Who'd drive away our Christian gentlefolks,
To catch us undefended in the trap
He baits with poisonous cheese, and lock us up
In that pernicious prison of Leigh Hall
With all his murderers! Give another name,
And say Leigh Hell, and burn it up with fire.'
And so they did, at last, Aurora."
"Did?"
"You never heard it, cousin? Vincent's news
Came stinted, then."
"They did? They burnt Leigh Hall?"

"You're sorry, dear Aurora? Yes indeed,
They did it perfectly; a thorough work,
And not a failure, this time. Let us grant
'Tis somewhat easier, though, to burn a house
Than build a system; yet that's easy, too—
In a dream. Books, pictures, ay, the pictures! What,
You think your dear Vandykes would give them pause?
Our proud ancestral Leighs, with those peaked beards,
Or bosoms white as foam thrown up on rocks
From the old-spent wave. Such calm defiant looks
They flared up with! now nevermore to twit
The bones in the family vault with ugly death.
Not one was rescued, save the Lady Mand,
Who threw you down, that morning you were born,
The undeniably lineal mouth and chin,
To wear forever for her gracious sake;
For which good deed I saved her: the rest went:
And you, you're sorry, cousin. Well, for me,
With all my phalansterians safely out, (Poor hearts, they helped the burners, it was said,) And certainly a few clapped hands and yelled)
The ruin did not hurt me as it might;
As when, for instance, I was hurt one day,
A certain letter being destroyed. In fact,
To see the great house flare so . . . oaken floors
Our fathers made so fine with rushes once,
Before our mothers furbished them with trains,
Carved wainscoats, panelled walls, (the favorite slide
For draining off a martyr — or a rogue)
The echoing galleries, half a half-mile long,

And all the various stairs that took you up,
And took you down, and took you round about
Upon their slippery darkness, recollect,
All helping to keep up one blazing jest;
The flames through all the casements pushing forth
Like red-hot devils crinkled into snakes,
All signifying, 'Look you, Romney Leigh,
We save the people from your saving, here,
Yet so as by fire! we make a pretty show
Besides,—and that's the best you've ever done.'
—To see this, almost moved myself to clap.
The 'vale et plaudite' came too with effect,
When in the roof fell, and the fire that paused,
Stunned momentarily beneath the stroke of slates
And tumbling rafters, rose at once and roared,
And, wrapping the whole house (which disappeared
In a mounting whirlwind of dilated flame), Blew upward straight its drift of fiery chaff
In the face of heaven . . . which blenched, and ran up higher."

"Poor Romney!"
"Sometimes when I dream," he said,
"I hear the silence after, 'twas so still,
For all those wild beasts, yelling, cursing round,
Were suddenly silent while you counted five,—
So silent that you heard a young bird fall
From the top-nest in the neighboring rookery,
Through edging over-rashly toward the light.
The old rooks had already fled too far
To hear the screech they fled with,
though you saw Some flying still, like scatterings of dead leaves

In autumn-gusts, seen dark against
the sky,—
All flying, ousted, like the house of
Leigh."

" Dear Romney ! "

" Evidently 'twould have been
A fine sight for a poet, sweet, like
you,
To make the verse blaze after. I my-
self,
Even I, felt something in the grand
old trees,
Which stood that moment like brute
Druid gods
Amazed upon the rim of ruin, where,
As into a blackened socket, the great
fire
Had dropped, still throwing up splin-
ters now and then
To show them gray with all their
centuries,
Left there to witness that on such a
day
The house went out."

" Ah ! "

" While you counted five,
I seemed to feel a little like a Leigh;
But then it passed, Aurora. A child
cried.
And I had enough to think of what
to do
With all those houseless wretches in
the dark,
And ponder where they'd dance the
next time,—they
Who had burnt the viol."

" Did you think of that?
Who burns his viol will not dance, I
know,
To cymbals, Romney."

" O my sweet, sad voice,"
He cried, — " O voice that speaks and
overcomes !
The sun is silent; but Aurora speaks."

" Alas ! " I said, " I speak I know not
what:
I'm back in childhood, thinking as a
child,
A foolish fancy—will it make you
smile?—
I shall not from the window of my
room
Catch sight of those old chimneys
any more."

" No more," he answered. " If you
pushed one day

Through all the green hills to our
fathers' house,
You'd come upon a great charred cir-
cle, where
The patient earth was singed an acre
round,
With one stone stair, symbolic of my
life,
Ascending, winding, leading up to
nought.
" Tis worth a poet's seeing. Will you
go ? "

I made no answer. Had I any right
To weep with this man, that I dared
to speak ?
A woman stood between his soul and
mine,
And waved us off from touching
evermore,
With those unclean white hands of
hers. Enough.
We had burnt our viols and were
silent.

So,

The silence lengthened till it pressed.
I spoke
To breathe, — " I think you were ill
afterward."

" More ill," he answered, " had been
scarcely ill.
I hoped this feeble fumbling at life's
knot
Might end concisely; but I failed to
die,
As formerly I failed to live, and thus
Grew willing, having tried all other
ways,
To try just God's. Humility's so
good
When pride's impossible. Mark us,
how we make
Our virtues, cousin, from our worn-
out sins,
Which snack of them from hence-
forth. Is it right,
For instance, to wed here while you
love there?
And yet, because a man sins once, the
sin
Cleaves to him in necessity to sin,
That if he sin not so, to damn him-
self,
He sins so, to damn others with him-
self:
And thus to wed here, loving there,
becomes
A duty. Virtue buds a dubious leaf

Round mortal brows: your ivy's better, dear.
 — Yet she, 'tis certain, is my very wife.
 The very lamb left mangled by the wolves
 Through my own bad shepherding; and could I choose
 But take her on my shoulder past this stretch
 Of rough, uneasy wilderness, poor lamb,
 Poor child, poor child? Aurora, my beloved,
 I will not vex you any more to-night;
 But, having spoken what I came to say,
 The rest shall please you. What she can in me,—
 Protection, tender liking, freedom, ease,—
 She shall have surely, liberally, for her
 And hers, Aurora. Small amends they'll make
 For hideous evils which she had not known
 Except by me, and for this imminent loss,
 This forfeit presence of a gracious friend,
 Which also she must forfeit for my sake,
 Since . . . drop your hand in mine a moment, sweet,
 We're parting! — Ah, my snowdrop, what a touch,
 As if the wind had swept it off! you grudge
 Your gelid sweetness on my palm but so,
 A moment? angry, that I could not bear
 You . . . speaking, breathing, living, side by side
 With some one called my wife . . . and live myself?
 Nay, be not cruel: you must understand!
 Your lightest footfall on a floor of mine
 Would shake the house, my lintel being uncrossed
 'Gainst angels: henceforth it is night with me,
 And so, henceforth, I put the shutters up:
 Aurora must not come to spoil my dark."

He smiled so feebly, with an empty hand
 Stretched sideway from me—as indeed he looked
 To any one but me to give him help;
 And while the moon came suddenly out full,
 The double-rose of our Italian moons,
 Sufficient plainly for the heaven and earth,
 (The stars, struck dumb, and washed away in dews
 Of golden glory, and the mountains steeped
 In divine languor) he, the man, appeared
 So pale and patient, like the marble man
 A sculptor puts his personal sadness in
 To join his grandeur of ideal thought—
 As if his mallet struck me from my height
 Of passionate indignation, I who had risen
 Pale, doubting paused. . . . Was Romney mad indeed?
 Had all this wrong of heart made sick the brain?

Then quiet, with a sort of tremulous pride,
 "Go, cousin," I said coldly: "a farewell
 Was sooner spoken 'twixt a pair of friends
 In those old days than seems to suit you now.
 Howbeit, since then, I've writ a book or two,
 I'm somewhat dull still in the manly art
 Of phrase and metaphor. Why, any man
 Can carve a score of white Loves out of snow,
 As Buonarroti in my Florence there,
 And set them on the wall in some safe shade,—
 As safe, sir, as your marriage! very good;
 Though if a woman took one from the ledge
 To put it on the table by her flowers,
 And let it mind her of a certain friend,
 'Twould drop at once, (so better) would not bear

Her nail-mark even, where she took it up
 A little tenderly (so best, I say:) For me, I would not touch the fragile thing
 And risk to spoil it half an hour before The sun shall shine to melt it: leave it there.
 I'm plain at speech, direct in purpose: when I speak, you'll take the meaning as it is,
 And not allow for puckerings in the silk
 By clever stitches. I'm a woman, sir, And use the woman's figures naturally,
 As you the male license. So, I wish you well.
 I'm simply sorry for the griefs you've had,
 And not for your sake only, but mankind's.
 This race is never grateful: from the first,
 One fills their cup at supper with pure wine,
 Which back they give at cross-time on a sponge,
 In vinegar and gall." "If gratefuller," He murmured, "by so much less pitiable!
 God's self would never have come down to die,
 Could man have thanked him for it." "Happily 'Tis patent, that, whatever," I resumed,
 "You suffered from this thanklessness of men,
 You sink no more than Moses' bulrush-boat
 When once relieved of Moses; for you're light.
 You're light, my cousin! which is well for you,
 And manly. For myself—now mark me, sir,
 They burnt Leigh Hall; but if, consummated
 To devils, heightened beyond Lucifer,
 They had burnt instead a star or two of those
 We saw above there just a moment back,
 Before the moon abolished them, destroyed

And riddled them in ashes through a sieve
 On the head of the foundering universe — what then?
 If you and I remained still you and I, It could not shift our places as mere friends,
 Nor render decent you should toss a phrase
 Beyond the point of actual feeling! — Nay,
 You shall not interrupt me: as you said,
 We're parting. Certainly, not once nor twice
 To-night you've mocked me somewhat, or yourself,
 And I, at least, have not deserved it so
 That I should meet it unsurprised. But now,
 Enough. We're parting . . . parting. Cousin Leigh,
 I wish you well through all the acts of life
 And life's relations, wedlock not the least,
 And it shall 'please me,' in your words, to know
 You yield your wife protection, freedom, ease,
 And very tender liking. May you live
 So happy with her, Romney, that your friends
 Shall praise her for it. Meantime some of us
 Are wholly dull in keeping ignorant Of what she has suffered by you, and what debt
 Of sorrow your rich love sits down to pay:
 But, if 'tis sweet for love to pay its debt,
 'Tis sweeter still for love to give its gift:
 And you, be liberal in the sweeter way;
 You can, I think. At least as touches me,
 You owe her, cousin Romney, no amends.
 She is not used to hold my gown so fast
 You need entreat her now to let it go:
 The lady never was a friend of mine, Nor capable—I thought you knew as much —

Of losing for your sake so poor a prize
As such a worthless friendship. Be
content,
Good cousin, therefore, both for her
and you !
I'll never spoil your dark, nor dull
your noon,
Nor vex you when you're merry or at
rest;
You shall not need to put a shutter up
To keep out this Aurora, though your
north
Can make Auroras which vex no-
body,
Scarce known from night, I fancied !
let me add,
My larks fly higher than some win-
dows. Well,
You've read your Leigs: Indeed
'twould shake a house,
If such as I came in with outstretched
hand
Still warm and thrilling from the
clasp of one . . .
Of one we know . . . to acknowledge,
palm to palm,
As mistress there, the Lady Walde-
mar."

"Now God be with us!" . . . with a
sudden clash
Of voice he interrupted. "What
name's that?
You spoke a name, Aurora." "Pardon me:
I would that, Romney, I could name
your wife
Nor wound you, yet be worthy."
"Are we mad?"
He echoed—"wife! mine! Lady
Waldemar!
I think you said my wife." He
sprang to his feet,
And threw his noble head back
toward the moon,
As one who swims against a stormy
sea,
Then laughed with such a helpless,
hopeless scorn,
I stood and trembled.
"May God judge me so!"
He said at last,—"I came convicted
here,
And humbled sorely, if not enough.
I came,
Because this woman from her crystal
soul
Had shown me something which a
man calls light;

Because too, formerly, I sinned by
her,
As then and ever since I have by
God,
Through arrogance of nature,—
though I loved . . .
Whom best I need not say, since that
is writ
Too plainly in the book of my mis-
deeds:
And thus I came here to abase myself,
And fasten, kneeling, on her regent
brows
A garland which I startled thence
one day
Of her beautiful June youth. But
here again
I'm baffled, fail in my abasement as
My aggrandizement: there's no room
left for me
At any woman's foot who miscon-
ceives
My nature, purpose, possible actions.
What!
Are you the Aurora who made large
my dreams
To frame your greatness? you con-
ceive so small?
You stand so less than woman through
being more,
And lose your natural instinct (like a
beast)
Through intellectual culture? since
indeed
I do not think that any common she
Would dare adopt such monstrous
forgeries
For the legible life-signature of such
As I, with all my blots, with all my
blots!
At last, then, peerless cousin, we are
peers;
At last we're even. Ah, you've left
your height,
And here upon my level we take
hands,
And here I reach you to forgive you,
sweet,
And that's a fall, Aurora. Long ago
You seldom understood me; but be-
fore
I could not blame you. Then, you
only seemed
So high above, you could not see be-
low;
But now I breathe,—but now I par-
don! Nay,
We're parting. Dearest, men have
burnt my house,

Maligned my motives; but not one,
I swear,
Has wronged my soul as this Aurora
has,
Who called the Lady Waldemar my
wife."

"Not married to her! Yet you
said" . . . "Again?

Nay, read the lines" (he held a letter
out)
"She sent you through me."

By the moonlight there
I tore the meaning out with passion-
ate haste
Much rather than I read it. Thus it
ran.

NINTH BOOK.

EVEN thus. I pause to write it out
at length,
The letter of the Lady Waldemar.

"I prayed your cousin Leigh to take
you this;
He says he'll do it. After years of
love,
Or what is called so, when a woman
frets
And fools upon one string of a man's
name,
And fingers it forever till it breaks,
He may perhaps do for her such a
thing,
And she accept it without detriment,
Although she should not love him
any more.
And I, who do not love him, nor love
you,
Nor you, Aurora, choose you shall
repent
Your most ungracious letter, and con-
fess,
Constrained by his convictions, (he's
convinced!)
You've wronged me foully. Are you
made so ill,
You woman, to impute such ill to me?
We both had mothers,— lay in their
bosom once.
And, after all, I thank you, Aurora
Leigh,
For proving to myself that there are
things

I would not do, — not for my life, nor
him, —
Though something I have somewhat
overdone;
For instance, when I went to see the
gods
One morning on Olympus, with a step
That shook the thunder from a cer-
tain cloud,
Committing myself wilfully. Could I
think
The Muse I pulled my heart out from
my breast
To soften had herself a sort of heart,
And loved my mortal. He at least
loved her,
I heard him say so: 'twas my rec-
ompense,
When, watching at his bedside four-
teen days,
He broke out ever, like a flame at
whiles
Between the heats of fever, "Is it
thou?
Breathe closer, sweetest mouth!"
And when, at last
The fever gone, the wasted face ex-
tinct,
As if it irked him much to know me
there,
He said, "'Twas kind, 'twas good,
'twas womanly,'
(And fifty praises to excuse no love),
'But was the picture safe he had ven-
tured for?'
And then, half wandering, — 'I have
loved her well,
Although she could not love me.'
'Say instead,'
I answered, 'she does love you.'
'Twas my turn
To rave: I would have married him
so changed,
Although the world had jeered me
properly
For taking up with Cupid at his
worst,
The silver quiver worn off on his hair.
'No, no,' he murmured, 'no, she
loves me not;
Aurora Leigh does better. Bring her
book
And read it softly, Lady Waldemar,
Until I thank your friendship more
for that
Than even for harder service.' So
I read
Your book, Aurora, for an hour that
day:

I kept its pauses, marked its emphasis;
 My voice, empaled upon its hooks of rhyme,
 Not once would writhe, nor quiver, nor revolt;
 I read on calmly,—calmly shut it up,
 Observing, 'There's some merit in the book;
 And yet the merit in't is *thrown away,
 As chances still with women if we write
 Or write not: we want string to tie our flowers.
 So drop them as we walk, which serves to show
 The way we went. Good-morning, Mister Leigh;
 You'll find another reader the next time.
 A woman who does better than to love,
 I hate; she will do nothing very well:
 Male poets are preferable, straining less,
 And teaching more.' I triumphed o'er you both,
 And left him.
 "When I saw him afterward,
 I had read your shameful letter, and my heart.
 He came with health recovered, strong, though pale,—
 Lord Howe and he, a courteous pair of friends,—
 To say what men dare say to women, when
 Their debtors. But I stopped them with a word,
 And proved I had never trodden such a road
 To carry so much dirt upon my shoe.
 Then, putting into it something of disdain,
 I asked forsooth his pardon, and my own,
 For having done no better than to love,
 And that not wisely, though 'twas long ago,
 And had been mended radically since.
 I told him, as I tell you now, Miss Leigh,
 And proved I took some trouble, for his sake,
 (Because I knew he did not love the girl)

To spoil my hands with working in the stream
 Of that poor bubbling nature, till she went,
 Consigned to one I trusted (my own maid)
 Who once had lived full five months in my house,
 Dressed hair superbly) with a lavish purse
 To carry to Australia where she had left
 A husband, said she. If the creature lied,
 The mission failed,—we all do fail and lie
 More or less,—and I'm sorry, which is all
 Expected from us when we fail the most,
 And go to church to own it. What I meant
 Was just the best for him, and me, and her . . .
 Best even for Marian!—I am sorry for't,
 And very sorry. Yet my creature said
 She saw her stop to speak in Oxford Street
 To one . . . no matter! I had sooner cut
 My hand off (though 'twere kissed the hour before,
 And promised a duke's troth-ring for the next)
 Than crush her silly head with so much wrong.
 Poor child! I would have mended it with gold,
 Until it gleamed like St. Sophia's dome
 When all the faithful troop to morning prayer:
 But he, he nipped the bud of such a thought
 With that cold Leigh look which I fancied once,
 And broke in, 'Henceforth she was called his wife.
 His wife required no succor: he was bound
 To Florence to resume this broken bond;
 Enough so. Both were happy, he and Howe,
 To acquit me of the heaviest charge of all'—
 —At which I shot my tongue against my fly,

And struck him: 'Would he carry, he
was just,
A letter from me to Aurora Leigh,
And ratify from his authentic mouth
My answer to her accusation?' —
'Yes,
If such a letter were prepared in
time.'
—He's just, your cousin; ay, abhor-
ently;
He'd wash his hands in blood to keep
them clean.
And so, cold, courteous, a mere gen-
tleman,
He bowed, we parted.
 "Parted. Face no more,
Voice no more, love no more! wiped
wholly out,
Like some ill scholar's scrawl from
heart and slate;
Ay, spit on, and so wiped out utterly,
By some coarse scholar! I have been
too coarse,
Too human. Have we business, in
our rank,
With blood i' the veins? I will have
henceforth none,
Not even to keep the color at my lip.
A rose is pink and pretty without
blood;
Why not a woman? When we've
played in vain
The game, to adore,—we have re-
sources still,
And can play on, at leisure, being
adored;
Here's Smith already swearing at my
feet
That I'm the typic she. Away with
Smith! —
Smith smacks of Leigh, — and hence-
forth I'll admit
No socialist within three crinolines,
To live and have his being. But for
you,
Though insolent your letter and ab-
surd,
And though I hate you frankly,—
take my Smith!
For when you have seen this famous
marriage tied,
A most unspotted Erle to a noble
Leigh.
(His love astray on one he should not
love)
Howbeit you may not want his love,
beware,
You'll want some comfort. So I leave
you Smith;

Take Smith! — he talks Leigh's sub-
jects, somewhat worse;
Adopts a thought of Leigh's, and
dwindleth it;
Goes leagues beyond, to be no inch
behind;
Will mind you of him, as a shoe-
string may
Of a man and women when they are
made like you
Grow tender to a shoe-string, foot-
print even,
Adore averted shoulders in a glass,
And memories of what, present once,
was loathed.
And yet you loathed not Romney,
though you played
At 'fox-and-goose' about him with
your soul:
Pass over fox, you rub out fox, — ig-
nore
A feeling, you eradicate it — the act's
Identical.
 "I wish you joy, Miss Leigh,
You've made a happy marriage for
your friend,
And all the honor, well-assorted
love,
Derives from you who love him, whom
he loves!
You need not wish me joy to think of
it,
I have so much. Observe, Aurora
Leigh,
Your droop of eyelid is the same as
his,
And but for you I might have won
his love,
And to you I have shown my naked
heart;
For which three things, I hate, hate,
hate you. Hush!
Suppose a fourth, — I cannot choose
but think
That, with him, I were virtuouser
than you
Without him: so I hate you from
this gulf
And hollow of my soul which opens
out
To what, except for you, had been
my heaven,
And is, instead, a place to curse by!
LOVE."

An active kind of curse. I stood
there cursed,
Confounded. I had seized and caught
the curse

Of the letter, with its twenty sting-
ing snakes,
In a moment's sweep of eyesight, and
I stood

Dazed. "Ah! not married."

"You mistake," he said,
"I'm married. Is not Marian Erle
my wife?"

As God sees things, I have a wife and
child;

And I, as I'm a man who honors
God,

Am here to claim them as my child

and wife.

I felt it hard to breathe, much less to
speak.

Nor word of mine was needed. Some
one else

Was there for answering. "Rom-
ney," she began,

"My great good angel, Romney."

Then, at first, I knew that Marian Erle was beauti-
ful.

She stood there, still and pallid as a
saint,

Dilated, like a saint in ecstasy,
As if the floating moonshine inter-
posed

Betwixt her foot and the earth, and
raised her up

To float upon it. "I had left my
child,

Who sleeps," she said, "and, having
drawn this way,

I heard you speaking . . . friend! —
Confirm me now.

You take this Marian, such as wicked
men

Have made her, for your honorable
wife?"

The thrilling, solemn, proud, pathetic
voice.

He stretched his arms out toward
that thrilling voice,

As if to draw it on to his embrace.
— "I take her as God made her, and

as men
Must fail to unmake her, for my hon-
ored wife."

She never raised her eyes, nor took a
step,

But stood there in her place, and
spoke again.

— "You take this Marian's child,
which is her shame

In sight of men and women, for your
child,
Of whom you will not ever feel
ashamed?"

The thrilling, tender, proud, pathetic
voice.

He stepped on toward it, still with
outstretched arms,
As if to quench upon his breast that
voice.

— "May God so father me as I do
him,

And so forsake me as I let him feel
He's orphaned haply. Here I take
the child

To share my cup, to slumber on my
knee,

To play his loudest gambol at my
foot,

To hold my finger in the public
ways,

Till none shall need inquire, 'Whose
child is this?'

The gesture saying so tenderly, 'My
own.'

She stood a moment silent in her
place;

Then turning toward me very slow
and cold,

— "And you, — what say you? —
will you blame me much,

If, careful for that outcast child of
mine,

I catch this hand that's stretched to
me and him,

Nor dare to leave him friendless in
the world

Where men have stoned me? Have
I not the right

To take so mere an aftermath from
life,

Else found so wholly bare? Or is it
wrong

To let your cousin, for a generous
bent,

Put out his ungloved fingers among
briers

To set a tumbling bird's nest some-
what straight?

You will not tell him, though we're
innocent,

We are not harmless . . . and that
both our harms

Will stick to his good, smooth, noble
life like burrs,

Never to drop off, though he shakes
the cloak?

You've been my friend: you will not now be his?
 You've known him that he's worthy of a friend,
 And you're his cousin, lady, after all,
 And therefore more than free to take his part,
 Explaining, since the nest is surely spoilt,
 And Marian what you know her,— though a wife,
 The world would hardly understand her case
 Of being just hurt and honest; while for him,
 'Twould ever twit him with his bastard child
 And married harlot. Speak while yet there's time.
 You would not stand and let a good man's dog
 Turn round and rend him, because his, and reared
 Of a generous breed; and will you let his act,
 Because it's generous? Speak. I'm bound to you,
 And I'll be bound by only you, in this."
 The thrilling, solemn voice, so passionless,
 Sustained, yet low, without a rise or fall,
 As one who had authority to speak,
 And not as Marian,

I looked up to feel
 If God stood near me, and beheld his heaven
 As blue as Aaron's priestly robe appeared
 To Aaron when he took it off to die.
 And then I spoke,— "Accept the gift, I say,
 My sister Marian, and be satisfied.
 The hand that gives has still a soul behind
 Which will not let it quail for having given,
 Though foolish worldlings talk they know not what
 Of what they know not. Romney's strong enough
 For this: do you be strong to know he's strong.
 He stands on right's side: never flinch for him,
 As if he stood on the other. You'll be bound
 By me? I am a woman of repute;

No fly-blown gossip ever specked my life;
 My name is clean and open as this hand,
 Whose glove there's not a man dares blab about,
 As if he had touched it freely. Here's my hand
 To clasp your hand, my Marian, owned as pure!—
 As pure, as I'm a woman and a Leigh;
 And, as I'm both, I'll witness to the world
 That Romney Leigh is honored in his choice
 Who chooses Marian for his honored wife."

Her broad wild woodland eyes shot out a light;
 Her smile was wonderful for rapture.
 "Thanks,
 My great Aurora." Forward then she sprang,
 And, dropping her impassioned spaniel head
 With all its brown abandonment of curls
 On Romney's feet, we heard the kisses drawn
 Through sobs upon the foot, upon the ground —
 "O Romney! O my angel! O unchanged!
 Though since we've parted I have passed the grave.
 But death itself could only better thee,
 Not change thee. *Thee* I do not thank at all:
 I but thank God who made thee what thou art,
 So wholly godlike." When he tried in vain
 To raise her to his embrace, escaping thence
 As any leaping fawn from a huntsman's grasp,
 She bounded off, and 'lighted beyond reach,
 Before him, with a staglike majesty
 Of soft, serene defiance, as she knew
 He could not touch her, so was tolerant
 He had cared to try. She stood there with her great
 Drowned eyes, and dripping cheeks,
 and strange sweet smile

That lived through all, as if one held
a light
Across a waste of waters,— shook
her head
To keep some thoughts down deeper
in her soul,—
Then, white and tranquil like a sum-
mer-cloud,
Which, having rained itself to a tardy
peace,
Stands still in heaven as if it ruled
the day,
Spoke out again, — “Although, my
generous friend,
Since last we met and parted you’re
unchanged,
And, having promised faith to Marian
Erle,
Maintain it, as she were not changed
at all ;
And though that’s worthy, though
that’s full of balm
To any conscious spirit of a girl
Who once has loved you as I loved
you once, —
Yet still it will not make her . . . if
she’s dead,
And gone away where none can give
or take
In marriage, — able to revive, return
And wed you, — will it, Romney ?
Here’s the point ;
My friend, we’ll see it plainer : you
and I
Must never, never, never join hands
so.
Nay, let me say it ; for I said it first
To God, and placed it, rounded to an
oath,
Far, far above the moon there, at his
feet,
As surely as I wept just now at
yours, —
We never, never, never join hands so.
And now, be patient with me : do not
think
I’m speaking from a false humility.
The truth is, I am grown so proud
with grief,
And He has said so often through his
nights
And through his mornings, ‘ Weep
a little still,
Thou foolish Marian, because women
must,
But do not blush at all except for
sin,’ —
That I, who felt myself unworthy
once

Of virtuous Romney and his high-
born race,
Have come to learn,— a woman, poor
or rich,
Despised or honored, is a human soul,
And what her soul is, that she is
herself,
Although she should be spit upon of
men,
As is the pavement of the churches
here,
Still good enough to pray in. And
being chaste
And honest, and inclined to do the
right,
And love the truth, and live my life
out green
And smooth beneath his steps, I
should not fear
To make him thus a less uneasy time
Than many a happier woman. Very
proud

You see me. Pardon, that I set a trap
To hear a confirmation in your voice,
Both yours and yours. It is so good
to know
‘Twas really God who said the same
before ;
And thus it is in heaven, that first
God speaks,
And then his angels. Oh, it does me
good,
It wipes me clean and sweet from
devil’s dirt,
That Romney Leigh should think me
worthy still
Of being his true and honorable wife !
Henceforth I need not say, on leaving
earth,
I had no glory in it. For the rest,
The reason’s ready (master, angel,
friend,
Be patient with me) wherefore you
and I
Can never, never, never join hands
so.

I know you’ll not be angry like a man
(For you are none) when I shall tell
the truth,
Which is, I do not love you, Romney
Leigh,
I do not love you. Ah, well ! catch
my hands,
Miss Leigh, and burn into my eyes
with yours,—
I swear I do not love him. Did I
once ?
‘Tis said that women have been
bruised to death,

And yet, if once they loved, that love
of theirs
Could never be drained out with all
their blood :
I've heard such things and pondered.
Did I indeed
Love once? or did I only worship?
Yes,
Perhaps, O friend, I set you up so
high
Above all actual good, or hope of good,
Or fear of evil, all that could be mine,
I haply set you above love itself,
And out of reach of these poor wo-
man's arms,
Angelic Romney. What was in my
thought?
To be your slave, your help, your toy,
your tool.
To be your love . . . I never thought
of that.
To give you love . . . still less. I
gave you love?
I think I did not give you any thing;
I was but only yours,—upon my
knees,
All yours, in soul and body, in head
and heart,—
A creature you had taken from the
ground,
Still crumbling through your fingers
to your feet
To join the dust she came from. Did
I love,
Or did I worship? Judge, Aurora
Leigh!
But, if indeed I loved, 'twas long
ago,
So long! — before the sun and moon
were made,
Before the hells were open, ah, be-
fore
I heard my child cry in the desert
night,
And knew he had no father. It may
be
I'm not as strong as other women
are,
Who, torn and crushed, are not un-
done from love.
It may be I am colder than the dead,
Who, being dead, love always. But
for me,
Once killed, this ghost of Marian
loves no more,
No more . . . except the child . . .
no more at all.
I told your cousin, sir, that I was
dead;

And now she thinks I'll get up from
my grave,
And wear my chin-cloth for a wed-
ding-veil,
And glide along the churchyard like
a bride,
While all the dead keep whispering
through the withes,
'You would be better in your place
with us,
You pitiful corruption!' At the
thought,
The damps break out on me like lep-
rosy,
Although I'm clean. Ay, clean as
Marian Erle!
As Marian Leigh, I know I were not
clean:
Nor have I so much life that I should
love,
Except the child. Ah God! I could
not bear
To see my darling on a good man's
knees,
And know by such a look, or such a
sigh,
Or such a silence, that he thought
sometimes,
'This child was fathered by some
cursed wretch' . . .
For, Romney, angels are less tender-
wise
Than God and mothers: even *you*
would think
What *we* think never. He is ours,
the child;
And we would sooner vex a soul in
heaven
By coupling with it the dead body's
thought
It left behind it in a last month's
grave
Than in my child see other than . . .
my child.
We only never call him fatherless.
Who has God and his mother. O my
babe,
My pretty, pretty blossom an ill
wind
Once blew upon my breast! Can any
think
I'd have another,—one called hap-
pier,
A fathered child, with father's love
and race
That's worn as bold and open as a
smile,
To vex my darling when he's asked
his name

And has no answer? What! a happier child
Than mine, my best, who laughed so loud to-night.
He could not sleep for pastime? Nay, I swear
By life and love, that if I lived like some,
And loved like . . . *some*, ay, loved you, Romney Leigh,
As some love, (eyes that have wept so much see clear)
I've room for no more children in my arms.
My kisses are all melted on one mouth,
I would not push my darling to a stool
To dandle babies. Here's a hand shall keep
Forever clean without a marriage-ring,
To tend my boy until he cease to need
One steadyng finger of it, and desert
(Not miss) his mother's lap to sit with men.
And when I miss him (not he me) I'll come
And say, 'Now give me some of Rom-
ney's work, —
To help your outcast orphans of the world
And comfort grief with grief.' For you, meantime,
Most noble Romney, wed a noble wife,
And open on each other your great souls:
I need not farther bless you. If I dared
But strain and touch her in her upper sphere
And say, 'Come down to Romney — pay my debt!'
I should be joyful with the stream of joy
Sent through me. But the moon is in my face . . .
I dare not, — though I guess the name he loves:
I'm learned with my studies of old days,
Remembering how he crushed his under lip
When some one came and spoke, or did not come:
Aurora, I could touch her with my hand,
And fly because I dare not.'

She was gone.
He smiled so sternly that I spoke in haste.
"Forgive her — she sees clearly for herself:
Her instinct's holy."

"I forgive!" he said,
"I only marvel how she sees so sure,
While others" . . . there he paused,
Then hoarse, abrupt, —
"Aurora, you forgive us, her and me?
For her, the thing she sees, poor loyal child,
If once corrected by the thing I know,
Had been unspoken, since she loves you well,
Has leave to love you; while for me, alas!
If once or twice I let my heart escape
This night . . . remember, where hearts slip and fall
They break beside: we're parting, —
parting, — all,
You do not love, that you should surely know
What that word means. Forgive, be tolerant:
It had not been, but that I felt myself So safe in impulsion and despair
I could not hurt you, though I tossed my arms
And sighed my soul out. The most utter wretch
Will choose his postures when he comes to die,
However in the presence of a queen;
And you'll forgive me some unseemly spasms
Which meant no more than dying.
Do you think I had ever come here in my perfect mind,
Unless I had come here in my settled mind
Bound Marian's, — bound to keep the bond, and give
My name, my house, my hand, the things I could,
To Marian? For even I could give as much:
Even I, affronting her exalted soul
By a supposition that she wanted these,
Could act the husband's coat and hat set up
To creak i' the wind, and drive the world-crows off
From pecking in her garden. Straw can fill

A hole to keep out vermin. Now, at last,
I own heaven's angels round her life suffice
To fight the rats of our society,
Without this Romney. I can see it at last;
And here is ended my pretension which
The most pretended. Over-proud of course,
Even so! —but not so stupid . . . blind . . . that I,
Whom thus the great Taskmaster of the world
Has set to meditate mistaken work,—
My dreary face against a dim blank wall
Throughout man's natural lifetime,— could pretend
Or wish . . . O love, I have loved you! O my soul,
I have lost you! But I swear by all yourself,
And all you might have been to me these years
If that June morning had not failed my hope,
I'm not so bestial to regret that day
This night,—this night, which still to you is fair;
Nay, not so blind, Aurora. I attest
Those stars above us which I cannot see" . . .

" You cannot" . . .

" That if Heaven itself should stoop,
Remix the lots, and give me another chance,
I'd say, ' No other!' I'd record my blank.

Aurora never should be wife of mine."

" Not see the stars?"

" 'Tis worse still not to see
To find your hand, although we're parting, dear.

A moment let me hold it ere we part.
And understand my last words—these at last! —

I would not have you thinking when I'm gone

That Romney dared to hanker for your love

In thought or vision, if attainable,
(Which certainly for me it never was)
And wished to use it for a dog to-day

To help the blind man stumbling.
God forbid!
And now I know he held you in his palm,
And kept you open-eyed to all my faults,
To save you at last from such a dreary end.
Believe me, dear, that if I had known, like him,
What loss was coming on me, I had done
As well in this as he has.— Farewell you
Who are still my light,— farewell!
How late it is!
I know that now. You've been too patient, sweet.
I will blow my whistle toward the lane,
And some one comes,— the same who brought me here.
Get in. Good-night."
" A moment. Heavenly Christ!
A moment. Speak once, Romney.
'Tis not true.
I hold your hands, I look into your face—
You see me?"
" No more than the blessed stars.
Be blessed too, Aurora. Nay, my sweet,
You tremble. Tender-hearted! Do you mind
Of yore, dear, how you used to cheat old John,
And let the mice out slyly from his traps,
Until he marvelled at the soul in mice
Which took the cheese, and left the snare? The same
Dear soft heart always! ' Twas for this I grieved
Howe's letter never reached you.
Ah, you had heard
Of illness, not the issue, not the extent,—
My life long sick with tossings up and down,
The sudden revulsion in the blazing house,
The strain and struggle both of body and soul,
Which left fire running in my veins for blood
Scarce lacked that thunderbolt of the falling beam
Which nicked me on the forehead as I passed

The gallery-door with a burden. Say
heaven's bolt,
Not William Erle's, not Marian's
father's,— tramp
And poacher, whom I found for what
he was,
And, eager for her sake to rescue
him,
Forth swept from the open highway
of the world,
Road-dust and all, till, like a wood-
land boar
Most naturally unwilling to be tamed,
He notched me with his tooth. But
not a word
To Marian! And I do not think, be-
sides,
He turned the tilting of the beam my
way;
And if he laughed, as many swear,
poor wretch,
Nor lie nor I supposed the hurt so
deep.
We'll hope his next laugh may be
merrier,
In a better cause."

"Blind, Romney?"

"Ah, my friend,
You'll learn to say it in a cheerful
voice.
I, too, at first desponded. To be
blind,
Turned out of nature, mulcted as a
man,
Refused the daily largess of the sun
To humble creatures! When the
fever's heat
Dropped from me, as the flame did
from my house,
And left me ruined like it, stripped of
all
The hues and shapes of aspectable
life,
A mere bare blind stone in the blaze
of day,
A man, upon the outside of the earth,
As dark as ten feet under, in the
grave,—

Why, that seemed hard."

"No hope?"

"A tear! you weep,
Divine Aurora? tears upon my
hand!
I've seen you weeping for a mouse, a
bird,—
But, weep for me, Aurora? Yes,
there's hope.
No hope of sight: I could be

learned, dear,

And tell you in what Greek and Latin
name
The visual nerve is withered to the
root,
Though the outer eyes appear indif-
ferent,
Unspotted in their crystals. But
there's hope.
The spirit, from behind this de-
throned sense,
Sees, waits in patience till the walls
break up
From which the bas-relief and fresco
have dropt:
There's hope. The man here, once so
arrogant
And restless, so ambitious, for his
part,
Of dealing with statistically packed
Disorders (from a pattern on his nail),
And packing such things quite an-
other way,
Is now contented. From his personal
loss
He has come to hope for others when
they lose,
And wear a gladder faith in what we
gain . . .
Through bitter experience, compen-
sation sweet,
Like that tear, sweetest. I am quiet
now,
As tender surely for the suffering
world,
But quiet,—sitting at the wall to
learn,
Content henceforth to do the thing I
can;
For though as powerless, said I, as a
stone,
A stone can still give shelter to a
worm,
And it is worth while being a stone
for that.
There's hope, Aurora."

"Is there hope for me?
For me? — and is there room beneath
the stone
For such a worm? And if I came
and said . . .
What all this weeping scarce will let
me say,
And yet what women cannot say at
all
But weeping bitterly . . . (the pride
keeps up
Until the heart breaks under it) . . .
I love,—
I love you, Romney" . . .

"Silence!" he exclaimed.
"A woman's pity sometimes makes
her mad.
A man's distraction must not cheat
his soul
To take advantage of it. Yet 'tis
hard—
Farewell, Aurora."

"But I love you, sir;
And when a woman says she loves a
man,
The man must hear her, though he
love her not,
Which . . . hush! . . . he has leave
to answer in his turn:
She will not surely blame him. As
for me,
You call it pity, think I'm generous?
'Twere somewhat easier, for a woman
proud
As I am, and I'm very vilely proud,
To let it pass as such, and press on
you
Love born of pity,—seeing that ex-
cellent loves
Are born so, often, nor the quicklier
die,—
And this would set me higher by the
head
Than now I stand. No matter. Let
the truth
Stand high; Aurora must be humble :
no,
My love's not pity merely. Obviously
I'm not a generous woman, never
was,
Or else, of old, I had not looked so
near
To weights and measures, grudging
you the power
To give, as first I scorned your power
to judge
For me, Aurora. I would have no
gifts
Forsooth, but God's ; and I would use
them, too,
According to my pleasure and my
choice,
As he and I were equals, you below,
Excluded from that level of inter-
change
Admitting benefaction. You were
wrong
In much? you said so. I was wrong
in most.
Oh, most! You only thought to res-
cue men
By half-means, half-way, seeing half
their wants,

While thinking nothing of your per-
sonal gain.
But I, who saw the human nature
broad
At both sides, comprehending too
the soul's,
And all the high necessities of art,
Betrayed the thing I saw, and
wrongs my own life
For which I pleaded. Passioned to
exalt
The artist's instinct in me at the cost
Of putting down the woman's, I for-
got
No perfect artist is developed here
From any imperfect woman. Flower
from root,
And spiritual from natural, grade by
grade
In all our life. A handful of the earth
To make God's image! the despised
poor earth,
The healthy odorous earth,—I missed,
with it
The divine breath that blows the nos-
trils out
To ineffable inflatus,—ay, the breath
Which love is. Art is much; but love
is more.
O art, my art, thou'rt much; but love
is more!
Art symbolizes heaven; but love is
God,
And makes heaven. I, Aurora, fell
from mine.
I would not be a woman like the rest,
A simple woman who believes in
love,
And owns the right of love because
she loves,
And, hearing she's beloved, is satis-
fied
With what contents God: I must
analyze,
Confront, and question, just as if a
fly
Refused to warm itself in any sun
Till such was *in leone*: I must fret,
Forsooth, because the month was
only May,
Be faithless of the kind of proffered
love,
And captions, lest it miss my dignity,
And scornful, that my lover sought a
wife
To use . . . to use! O Romney, O
my love!
I am changed since then, changed
wholly; for indeed

If now you'd stoop so low to take my love,
And use it roughly, without stint or spare,
As men use common things with more behind,
(And, in this, ever would be more behind)
To any mean and ordinary end,
The joy would set me, like a star in heaven,
So high up, I should shine because of height,
And not of virtue. Yet in one respect,
Just one, beloved, I am in no wise changed :
I love you, loved you . . . loved you first and last,
And love you on forever. Now I know
I loved you always, Romney. She who died
Knew that, and said so ; Lady Walde-mar
Knows that . . . and Marian. I had known the same,
Except that I was prouder than I knew,
And not so honest. Ay, and as I live,
I should have died so, crushing in my hand
This rose of love, the wasp inside and all,
Ignoring ever to my soul and you Both rose and pain,—except for this great loss,
This great despair,—to stand before your face
And know you do not see me where I stand.
You think, perhaps, I am not changed from pride,
And that I chiefly bear to say such words
Because you cannot shame me with your eyes ?
O calm, grand eyes, extinguished in a storm,
Blown out like lights o'er melancholy seas,
Though shrieked for by the ship-wrecked ! O my Dark, My Cloud,—to go before me every day,
While I go ever toward the wilderness,—
I would that you could see me bare to the soul !
If this be pity, 'tis so for myself,

And not for Romney : he can stand alone ;
A man like him is never overcome : No woman like me counts him pitiable
While saints applaud him. He mis-took the world ;
But I mistook my own heart, and that slip
Was fatal. Romney, will you leave me here ?
So wrong, so proud, so weak, so un-consoled,
So mere a woman !—and I love you so,
I love you, Romney”— Could I see his face
I wept so ? Did I drop against his breast,
Or did his arms constrain me ? Were my cheeks hot, overflooded, with my tears, or his ?
And which of our two large explosive hearts
So shook me ? That I know not. There were words
That broke in utterance . . . melted in the fire ;
Embrace that was convulsion . . . then a kiss
As long and silent as the ecstatic night,
And deep, deep, shuddering breaths, which meant beyond
Whatever could be told by word or kiss.
But what he said . . . I have written day by day,
With somewhat even writing. Did I think
That such a passionate rain would intercept
And dash this last page ? What he said, indeed,
I fain would write it down here like the rest,
To keep it in my eyes, as in my ears, The heart's sweet scripture, to be read at night
When weary, or at morning when afraid,
And lean my heaviest oath on when I swear,
That when all's done, all tried, all counted here,
All great arts, and all good philosophies,

This love just puts its hand out in a dream,
And straight outstretches all things.
What he said I fain would write. But, if an angel spoke
In thunder, should we haply know much more
Than that it thundered? If a cloud came down
And wrapt us wholly, could we draw its shape,
As if on the outside, and not overcome?
And so he spake. His breath against my face
Confused his words, yet made them more intense.—
(As when the sudden finger of the wind
Will wipe a row of single city lamps
To a pure white line of flame, more luminous
Because of obliteration) more intense,
The intimate presence carrying in itself
Complete communication, as with souls,
Who, having put the body off, perceive
Through simply being. Thus 'twas granted me
To know he loved me to the depth and height
Of such large natures, ever competent,
With grand horizons by the sea or land,
To love's grand sunrise. Small spheres hold small fires;
But he loved largely, as a man can love,
Who, baffled in his love, dares live his life,
Accept the ends which God loves, for his own,
And lift a constant aspect.

From the day I brought to England my poor searching face,
(An orphan even of my father's grave)
He had loved me, watched me, watched his soul in mine,
Which in me grew and heightened into love.
For he, a boy still, had been told the tale
Of how a fairy bride from Italy,

With smells of oleanders in her hair,
Was coming through the vines to touch his hand;
Whereat the blood of boyhood on the palm
Made sudden heats. And when at last I came,
And lived before him, lived, and rarely smiled,
He smiled, and loved me for the thing I was,
As every child will love the year's first flower,
(Not certainly the fairest of the year,
But in which the complete year seems to blow)
The poor sad snowdrop, growing between drifts,
Mysterious medium 'twixt the plant and frost,
So faint with winter while so quick with spring,
And doubtful if to thaw itself away
With that snow near it. Not that Romney Leigh
Had loved me coldly. If I thought so once,
It was as if I had held my hand in fire,
And shook for cold. But now I understood
Forever, that the very fire and heat
Of troubling passion in him burned him clear,
And shaped to dubious order word and act;
That, just because he loved me over all,—
All wealth, all lands, all social privilege,
To which chance made him unexpected heir,—
And just because on all these lesser gifts,
Constrained by conscience and the sense of wrong,
He had stamped with steady hand God's arrow-mark
Of dedication to the human need,
He thought it should be so, too, with his love.
He, passionately loving, would bring down
His love, his life, his best, (because the best)
His bride of dreams, who walked so still and high
Through flowery poems, as through meadow-grass,

The dust of golden lilies on her feet,
That she should walk beside him on
the rocks
In all that clang and hewing out of
men,
And help the work of help which was
his life,
And prove he kept back nothing,—
not his soul.
And when I failed him,—for I failed
him, I,—
And when it seemed he had missed
my love, he thought,
“Aurora makes room for a working-
noon,”
And so, self-girded with torn strips
of hope,
Took up his life as if it were for death,
(Just capable of one heroic aim).
And threw it in the thickest of the
world,
At which men laughed as if he had
drowned a dog.
No wonder,—since Aurora failed
him first!
The morning and the evening made
his day.

But oh the night! O bitter-sweet! O
sweet!
O dark, O moon and stars, O ecstasy
Of darkness! O great mystery of
love,
In which absorbed, loss, anguish,
treason's self,
Enlarges rapture, as a pebble dropt
In some full winecup over-brims the
wine!
While we two sate together, leaned
that night
So close my very garments crept and
thrilled
With strange electric life, and both
my cheeks
Grew red, then pale, with touches
from my hair
In which his breath was; while the
golden moon
Was hung before our faces as the
badge
Of some sublime, inherited despair,
Since ever to be seen by only one,—
A voice said, low and rapid as a sigh,
Yet breaking, I felt conscious, from a
smile,
“Thank God, who made me blind to
make me see!
Shine on, Aurora, dearest light of
souls,

Which rul'st forevermore both day
and night!
I am happy.”
I flung closer to his breast,
As sword that after battle flings to
sheath;
And, in that hurtle of united souls,
The mystic motions which in com-
mon moods
Are shut beyond our sense broke in
on us,
And, as we sate, we felt the old earth
spin,
And all the starry turbulence of
worlds
Swing round us in their audient cir-
cles, till
If that same golden moon were over-
head
Or if beneath our feet, we did not
know.

And then calm, equal, smooth with
weights of joy,
His voice rose, as some chief musi-
cian's song
Amid the old Jewish temple's Selah-
pause,
And bade me mark how we two met
at last
Upon this moon-bathed promontory
of earth,
To give up much on each side, then
take all.
“Beloved,” it sang, “we must be
here to work;
And men who work can only work
for men,
And, not to work in vain, must com-
prehend
Humanity, and so work humanly,
And raise men's bodies still by rais-
ing souls,
As God did first.”
“But stand upon the earth,”
I said, “to raise them, (this is human
too;
There's nothing high which has not
first been low;
My humbleness, said One, has made
me great!)

As God did last.”
“And work all silently
And simply,” he returned, “as God
does all;
Distort our nature never for our
work,
Nor count our right hands stronger
for being hoofs.

The man most man, with tenderest
human hands,
Works best for men, as God in
Nazareth."

He paused upon the word, and then
resumed:
"Fewer programmes, we who have
no prescience.
Fewer systems, we who are held, and
do not hold.
Less mapping out of masses to be
saved,
By nations or by sexes. Fourier's
void,
And Comte absurd, and Cabet,
puerile.
Subsist no rules of life outside of
life,
No perfect manners, without Chris-
tian souls:
The Christ himself had been no Law-
giver
Unless he had given the life too,
with the law."

I echoed thoughtfully,—"The man
most man
Works best for men, and, if most
man indeed,
He gets his manhood plainest from
his soul;
While obviously this stringent soul
itself
Obeyes the old law of development,
The Spirit ever witnessing in ours,
And love, the soul of soul, within the
soul,
Evolving it sublimely. First, God's
love."

"And next," he smiled, "the love of
wedded souls,
Which still presents that mystery's
counterpart.
Sweet shadow-rose upon the water of
life,
Of such a mystic substance, Sharon
gave
A naine to ! human, vital, fructuous
rose,
Whose calyx holds the multitude of
leaves,
Loves filial, loves fraternal, neighbor-
loves
And civic,—all fair petals, all good
scents,
All reddened, sweetened, from one
central Heart!"

"Alas!" I cried, "it was not long
ago
You swore this very social rose smelt
ill."

"Alas!" he answered, "is it a rose at
all?
The filial's thankless, the fraternal's
hard,
The rest is lost. I do but stand and
think,
Across the waters of a troubled life,
This flower of heaven so vainly over-
hangs,
What perfect counterpart would be in
sight
If tanks were clearer. Let us clean
the tubes,
And wait for rains. O poet, O my
love,
Since I was too ambitious in my
deed,
And thought to distance all men in
success,
(Till God came on me, marked the
place, and said,
'Ill-doer, henceforth keep within this
line,
Attempting less than others;' and I
stand
And work among Christ's little ones,
content,) Come thou, my compensation, my
dear sight,
My morning-star, my morning! rise
and shine,
And touch my hills with radiance not
their own.
Shine out for two, Aurora, and fulfil
My falling-short that must be! work
for two,
As I, though thus restrained, for two
shall love!
Gaze on, with inscient vision, toward
the sun,
And from his visceral heat pluck
out the roots
Of light beyond him. Art's a ser-
vice, mark:
A silver key is given to thy clasp,
And thou shalt stand unwearied,
night and day,
And fix it in the hard, slow-turning
wards,
To open, so, that intermediate door
Betwixt the different planes of sensu-
ous form
And form insensuous, that inferior
men

May learn to feel on still through these to those,
And bless thy ministration. The world waits
For help. Beloved, let us love so well,
Our work shall still be better for our love,
And still our love be sweeter for our work,
And both commended, for the sake of each,
By all true workers and true lovers born.
Now press the clarion on thy woman's lip,
(Love's holy kiss shall still keep consecrate)
And breathe thy fine keen breath along the brass,
And blow all class-walls level as Jericho's
Past Jordan, crying from the top of souls,
To souls, that here assembled on earth's flats,
They get them to some purer eminence
Than any hitherto beheld for clouds ! What height we know not, but the way we know,
And how, by mounting ever, we attain,
And so climb on. It is the hour for souls,
That bodies, leavened by the will and love,
Be lightened to redemption. The world's old;
But the old world waits the time to be renewed,

Toward which new hearts in individual growth
Must quicken, and increase to multitude
In new dynasties of the race of men, Developed whence shall grow spontaneously
New churches, new economies, new laws
Admitting freedom, new societies
Excluding falsehood: He shall make all new."

My Romney !—Lifting up my hand in his,
As wheeled by seeing spirits toward the east,
He turned instinctively, where, faint and far,
Along the tingling desert of the sky, Beyond the circle of the conscious hills,
Were laid in jasper-stone as clear as glass
The first foundations of that new, near day
Which should be builded out of heaven to God.
He stood a moment with erected brows
In silence, as a creature might who gazed,—
Stood calm, and fed his blind, majestic eyes
Upon the thought of perfect noon: and when
I saw his soul saw,— " Jasper first," I said,
" And second, sapphire; third, chalcedony;
The rest in order,—last, an amethyst."

A DRAMA OF EXILE.

SCENE. — *The outer side of the gate of Eden shut fast with cloud, from the depth of which revolves a sword of fire self-moved. ADAM and EVE are seen in the distance, flying along the glare.*

LUCIFER, alone.

REJOICE in the clefts of Gehenna,
My exiled, my host !
Earth has exiles as hopeless as when a
Heaven's empire was lost.
Through the seas of her shaken
foundations

Smoke up in great joy !
With the smoke of your fierce exultations

Deform and destroy !
Smoke up with your lurid revenges,
And darken the face
Of the white heavens, and taunt
them with changes
From glory and grace !
We in falling, while destiny strangles,
Pull down with us all.
Let them look to the rest of their
angels !

Who's safe from a fall ?
HE saves not. Where's Adam ? Can
pardon

Requicken that sod ?
Unkinged is the King of the Garden,
The image of God.
Other exiles are cast out of Eden,
More curse has been hurled:
Come up, O my locusts, and feed in
The green of the world !
Come up ! we have conquered by
evil ;

Good reigns not alone :
I prevail now, and, angel or devil,
Inherit a throne.

[In sudden apparition a watch of innumerable angels, rank above rank, slopes up from around the gate to the zenith. The angel GABRIEL descends.]

LUC. Hail, Gabriel, the keeper of
the gate !

Now that the fruit is plucked, prince
Gabriel,
I hold that Eden is impregnable
Under thy keeping.

GAB. Angel of the sin,
Such as thou standest, — pale in the
drear light
Which rounds the rebel's work with
Maker's wrath, —
Thou shalt be an Idea to all souls,
A monumental melancholy gloom
Seen down all ages, whence to mark
despair,
And measure out the distances from
good.

Go from us straightway !

LUC. Wherefore ?
GAB. Lucifer,
Thy last step in this place trod sor-
row up.
Recoil before that sorrow, if not this
sword.

LUC. Angels are in the world :
wherefore not I ?
Exiles are in the world : wherefore
not I ?

The cursed are in the world : where-
fore not I ?

GAB. Depart !
LUC. And where's the logic of " de-
part "?
Our lady Eve had half been satis-
fied
To obey her Maker, if I had not learnt
To fix my postulate better. Dost
thou dream
Of guarding some monopoly in heav-
en
Instead of earth ? Why, I can dream
with thee
To the length of thy wings.

GAB. I do not dream.
This is not heaven, even in a dream,
nor earth,
As earth was once, first breathed
among the stars,
Articulate glory from the mouth di-
vine,

To which the myriad spheres thrilled
audibly,
Touched like a lute-string, and the
sons of God
Said AMEN, singing it. I know that
this
Is earth not new created, but new
cursed—
This, Eden's gate, not opened, but
built up
With a final cloud of sunset. Do I
dream?
Alas, not so! this is the Eden lost
By Lucifer the serpent; this the
sword
(This sword alive with justice and
with fire)
That smote upon the forehead Lucifer
The angel. Wherefore, angel, go, de-
part!
Enough is sinned and suffered.
Luc. By no means.
Here's a brave earth to sin and suffer
on:
It holds fast still; it cracks not under
curse;
It holds like mine immortal. Pres-
ently
We'll sow it thick enough with graves
as green,
Or greener certes, than its knowl-
edge-tree.
We'll have the cypress for the tree of
life,
More eminent for shadow: for the
rest,
We'll build it dark with towns and
pyramids,
And temples, if it please you: we'll
have feasts
And funerals also, merrymakes and
wars,
Till blood and wine shall mix, and
run along
Right o'er the edges. And, good
Gabriel,
(Ye like that word in heaven), I too
have strength,—
Strength to behold Him, and not wor-
ship Him;
Strength to fall from Him, and not
cry on Him;
Strength to be in the universe, and
yet
Neither God nor his servant. The
red sign
Burnt on my forehead, which you
taunt me with,

Is God's sign that it bows not unto
God,—
The potter's mark upon his work to
show
It rings well to the striker. I and
the earth
Can bear more curse.
Gab. O miserable earth,
O ruined angel!
Luc. Well, and if it be,
I CHOOSE this ruin: I elected it
Of my will, not of service. What I
do,
I do volitent, not obedient,
And overtop thy crown with my de-
spair.
My sorrow crowns me. Get thee back
to heaven,
And leave me to the earth, which is
mine own
In virtue of her ruin, as I hers
In virtue of my revolt! turn thou,
from both
That bright, impassive, passive angel-
hood,
And spare to read us backward any
more
Of the spent hallelujahs!
Gab. Spirit of scorn,
I might say of unreason, I might
say
That who despairs, acts; that who
acts, comivies
With God's relations set in time and
space;
That who elects, assumes a some-
thing good
Which God made possible; that who
lives, obeys
The law of a Life-maker . . .
Luc. Let it pass:
No more, thou Gabriel! What if I
stand up
And strike my brow against the crys-
talline
Roofing the creatures—shall I say,
for that,
My stature is too high for me to
stand,
Henceforward I must sit? Sit thou!
Gab. I kneel.
Luc. A heavenly answer. Get thee
to thy heaven,
And leave my earth to me!
Gab. Through heaven and earth
God's will moves freely, and I follow
it,
As color follows light. He overflows
The firmamental walls with deity,

Therefore with love. His lightnings
go abroad;
His pity may do so; his angels must
Whene'er he gives them charges.

Luc. Verily,
I and my demons, who are spirits of
scorn,
Might hold this charge of standing
with a sword
'Twixt man and his inheritance, as
well
As the benignant angel of you all.

Gab. Thou speakest in the shadow
of thy change.
If thou hadst gazed upon the face of
God
This morning for a moment, thou
hadst known
That only pity fitly can chastise.
Hate but avenges.

Luc. As it is, I know
Something of pity. When I reeled in
heaven,
And my sword grew too heavy for
my grasp,
Stabbing through matter which it
could not pierce
So much as the first shell of, toward
the throne;
When I fell back, down, staring up
as I fell,
The lightnings holding open my
seathed lids,
And that thought of the infinite of
God
Hurled after to precipitate descent,
When countless angel faces still and
stern
Pressed out upon me from the level
heavens
Adown the abysmal spaces, and I fell,
Trampled down by your stillness,
and struck blind
By the sight within your eyes,—
'twas then I knew
How ye could pity, my kind angel-
hood!

Gab. Alas, discrowned one, by the
truth in me
Which God keeps in me, I would
give away
All—save that truth and his love
keeping it,—
To lead thee home again into the light,
And hear thy voice chant with the
morning stars
When their rays tremble round them
with much song
Sung in more gladness!

Luc. Sing, my morning star!
Last beautiful, last heavenly, that I
loved!

If I could drench thy golden locks
with tears,
What were it to this angel?

Gab. What love is.
And now I have named God.

Luc. Yet, Gabriel,
By the lie in me which I keep myself,
Thou'rt a false swearer. Were it
otherwise,
What dost thou here, vouchsafing
tender thoughts
To that earth-angel or earth-demon
(which,
Thou and I have not solved the prob-
lem yet
Enough to argue), that fallen Adam
there,
That red-clay and a breath, who must,
forsooth,

Live in a new apocalypse of sense,
With beauty and music waving in his
trees,
And running in his rivers, to make
glad
His soul made perfect?—is it not for
hope—
A hope within thee deeper than thy
truth—

Of finally conducting him and his
To fill the vacant thrones of me and
mine,

Which affront heaven with their
vacuity?

Gab. Angel, there are no vacant
thrones in heaven
To suit thy empty words. Glory and
life
Fulfil their own depletions; and, if
God
Sighed you far from him, his next
breath drew in
A compensative splendor up the vast,
Flushing the starry arteries.

Luc. With a change!
So let the vacant thrones and gardens
too
Fill as may please you!—and be pitiful,
As ye translate that word, to the de-
throned
And exiled,—man or angel. The fact
stands,
That I, the rebel, the cast out and
down,
Am here, and will not go; while there,
along

The light to which ye flash the desert
out,
Flies your adopted Adam, your red-clay
In two kinds, both being flawed.
Why, what is this?
Whose work is this? Whose hand
was in the work?
Against whose hand? In this last
strike, methinks,
I am not a fallen angel!
Gab. Dost thou know
Aught of those exiles?
Luc. Ay: I know they have fled
Silent all day along the wilderness:
I know they wear, for burden on their
backs,
The thought of a shut gate of Para-
dice,
And faces of the marshalled cheru-
bin
Shining against, not for, them; and I
know
They dare not look in one another's
face,
As if each were a cherub!
Gab. Dost thou know
Aught of their future?
Luc. Only as much as this:
That evil will increase and multiply
Without a benediction.
Gab. Nothing more?
Luc. Why, so the angels taunt!
What should be more?
Gab. God is more.
Luc. Proving what?
Gab. That he is God,
And capable of saving. Lucifer,
I charge thee, by the solitude he kept
Ere he created, leave the earth to
God!
Luc. My foot is on the earth, firm as
my sin.
Gab. I charge thee, by the memory
of heaven
Ere any sin was done, leave earth to
God!
Luc. My sin is on the earth, to reign
thereon.
Gab. I charge thee, by the choral
song we sang,
When, up against the white shore of
our feet,
The depths of the creation swelled and
brake,
And the new worlds—the beaded
foam and flower
Of all that coil—roared outward into
space

On thunder-edges, leave the earth to
God!
Luc. My woe is on the earth, to
curse thereby.
Gab. I charge thee, by that mournful
morning star
Which trembles . . .
Luc. Enough spoken. As the pine
In norland forest drops its weight of
snows
By a night's growth, so, growing
toward my ends
I drop thy counsels. Farewell, Ga-
briel!
Watch out thy service: I achieve my
will.
And peradventure in the after-years,
When thoughtful men shall bend
their spacious brows
Upon the storm and strife seen every-
where
To ruffle their smooth manhood, and
break up
With lurid lights of intermittent
hope
Their human fear and wrong, they
may discern
The heart of a lost angel in the earth.

CHORUS OF EDEN SPIRITS.
(*Chanting from Paradise, while ADAM and EVE fly across the sword-glare.*)

Harken, oh harken! let your souls
behind you
Turn, gently moved!
Our voices feel along the Dread to
find you,
O lost, beloved!
Through the thick-shielded and strong-
marshalled angels
They press and pierce:
Our requiems follow fast on our evan-
gels:
Voice throbs in verse.
We are but orphaned spirits left in
Eden
A time ago:
God gave us golden cups, and we
were bidden
To feed you so.
But now our right hand hath no cup
remaining,
No work to do;
The mystic hydromel is spilt, and
staining
The whole earth through,—
Most ineradicable stains, for showing
(Not interfused!)

That brighter colors were the world's
foregoing,

Than shall be used.

Harken, oh harken ! ye shall harken
surely,

For years and years,
The noise beside you, dripping coldly,
purely,

Of spirits' tears.

The yearning to a beautiful denied
you

Shall strain your powers;

Ideal sweetneses shall over-glide
you,

Resumed from ours.

In all your music our pathetic minor
Your ears shall cross,

And all good gifts shall mind you of
diviner,

With sense of loss.

We shall be near you in your poet-
languors

And wild extremes,

What time ye vex the desert with
vain angers,

Or mock with dreams.

And when upon you, weary after
rainning,

Death's seal is put,

By the foregone ye shall discern the
coining,

Through eyelids shut.

Spirits of the trees.

Hark ! the Eden trees are stirring,
Soft and solemn in your hearing,—

Oak and linden, palm and fir,

Tamarisk and juniper,

Each still throbbing in vibration

Since that crowning of creation

When the God-breath spake abroad,

Let us make man like to God !

And the pine stood quivering
As the awful word went by,

Like a vibrant music-string

Stretched from mountain-peak to sky ;
And the platan did expand

Slow and gradual, branch and head ;

And the cedar's strong black shade

Fluttered brokenly and grand :

Grove and wood were swept aslant

In emotion jubilant.

Voice of the same, but softer.

Which divine impulsion cleaves

In dim movements to the leaves

Dropt and lifted, dropt and lifted,

In the sunlight greenly sifted, —

In the sunlight and the moonlight

Greenly sifted through the trees.

Ever wave the Eden trees

In the nightlight and the moonlight.
With a ruffling of green branches

Shaded off to resonances,

Never stirred by rain or breeze.

Fare ye well, farewell !

The sylvan sounds, no longer audible,
Expire at Eden's door.

Each footstep of your treading
Treads out some murmur which ye
heard before.

Farewell ! the trees of Eden
Ye shall hear nevermore.

River-spirits.

Hark the flow of the four rivers,

Hark the flow !

How the silence round you shivers,
While our voices through it go

Cold and clear !

A Softer Voice.

Think a little, while ye hear,

Of the banks

Where the willows and the deer
Crowd in intermingled ranks,

As if all would drink at once

Where the living water runs ! —

Of the fishes' golden edges

Flashing in and out the sedges ;

Of the swans, on silver thrones,
Floating down the winding

streams

With impassive eyes turned sho-
ward,

And a chant of undertones,

And the lotus leaning forward

To help them into dreams !

Fare ye well, farewell !

The river-sounds, no longer audible,

Expire at Eden's door.

Each footstep of your treading

Treads out some murmur which ye
heard before.

Farewell ! the streams of Eden

Ye shall hear nevermore.

Bird-spirit.

I am the nearest nightingale

That singeth in Eden after you,

And I am singing loud and true,

And sweet: I do not fail.

I sit upon a cypress-bough,

Close to the gate, and I fling my song

Over the gate, and through the mail

Of the warden angels marshalled

strong, —

Over the gate, and after you.

And the warden-angels let it pass,

Because the poor brown bird, alas !

Sings in the garden, sweet and true.

And I build my song of high, pure

notes,

Note over note, height over height,
Till I strike the arch of the infinite;
And I bridge abyssmal agonies
With strong, clear calms of harmonies;
And something abides, and something floats
In the song which I sing after you.
Fare ye well, farewell!
The creature-sounds, no longer audible,
 Expire at Eden's door.
Each footstep of your treading
Treads out some cadence which ye heard before.
Farewell! the birds of Eden
 Ye shall hear nevermore.
Flower-spirits.
We linger, we linger,
 The last of the throng,
Like the tones of a singer
 Who loves his own song.
We are spirit-aromas
 Of blossom and bloom.
We call your thoughts home, as
 Ye breathe our perfume,
To the amaranth's splendor
 Afire on the slopes;
To the lily-bells tender
 And gray heliotropes;
To the poppy-plains keeping
 Such dream-breath and blee,
That the angels there stepping
 Grew whiter to see;
To the nook set with moly,
 Ye jested one day in,
Till your smile waxed too holy,
 And left your lips praying;
To the rose in the bower-place,
 That dripped o'er you sleeping
To the asphodel flower-place,
 Ye walked ankle-deep in.
We pluck at your raiment,
 We stroke down your hair,
We faint in our lament,
 And pine into air.
Fare ye well, farewell!
The Eden scents, no longer sensible,
 Expire at Eden's door.
Each footstep of your treading
Treads out some fragrance which ye knew before.
Farewell! the flowers of Eden
 Ye shall smell nevermore.

[*There is silence. ADAM and EVE fly on, and never look back. Only a colossal shadow, as of*

the dark Angel passing quickly, is cast upon the sword-glare.

SCENE.—*The extremity of the sword-glare.*
*A*dam. Pausing a moment on this outer edge
Where the supernal sword-glare cuts in light
The dark exterior desert, hast thou strength,
Beloved, to look behind us to the gate?
*E*ve. Have I not strength to look up to thy face?
*A*dam. We need be strong: yon spectacle of cloud,
Which seals the gate up to the final doom,
Is God's seal manifest. There seem to lie
A hundred thunders in it, dark and dead,
The unmolten lightnings vein it motionless;
And, outward from its depth, the self-moved sword
Swings slow its awful gnomon of red fire
From side to side, in pendulous horror slow,
Across the stagnant ghastly glare thrown flat
On the intermediate ground from that to this.
The angelic hosts, the archangelic pomps,
Thrones, dominations, princedoms, rank on rank,
Rising sublimely to the feet of God,
On either side, and overhead the gate,
Show like a glittering and sustained smoke
Drawn to an apex. That their faces shine
Betwixt the solemn clasping of their wings
Clasped high to a silver point above their heads,
We only guess from hence, and not discern.
*E*ve. Though we were near enough to see them shine,
The shadow on thy face were awfuller
To me, at least,—to me,—than all their light.
*A*dam. What is this, Eve? Thou droppest heavily.

In a heap earthward, and thy body
heaves
Under the golden floodings of thine
hair.
Eve. O Adam, Adam ! by that name
of Eve, —
Thine Eve, thy life, — which suits me
little now,
Seeing that I now confess myself thy
death
And thine undoer, as the snake was
mine, —
I do adjure thee put me straight
away,
Together with my name ! Sweet,
punish me !
O love, be just ! and ere we pass be-
yond
The light cast outward by the fiery
sword,
Into the dark which earth must be to
us,
Bruise my head with thy foot, as the
curse said
My seed shall the first tempter's ! —
strike with curse,
As God struck in the garden ! and as
HE,
Being satisfied with justice and with
wrath,
Did roll his thunder gentler at the
close,
Thon, peradventure, mayst at last
recoil
To some soft need of mercy. Strike,
my lord !
I, also, after tempting, writhe on the
ground,
And I would feed on ashes from thine
hand,
As suits me, O my tempted !
Adam. My beloved,
Mine Eve and life, I have no other
name
For thee, or for the sun, than what ye
are, —
My utter life and light ! If we have
fallen,
It is that we have sinned, — we. God
is just;
And, since his curse doth comprehend
us both,
It must be that his balance holds the
weights
Of first and last sin on a level.
What !
Shall *I*, who had not virtue to stand
straight
Among the hills of Eden, here assume

To mend the justice of the perfect
God,
By piling up a curse upon his curse,
Against thee, — thee ?
Eve. For so, perchance, thy God
Might take thee into grace for scorn-
ing me,
Thy wrath against the sinner giving
proof
Of inward abrogation of the sin:
And so the blessed angels might come
down
And walk with thee as erst, — I think
they would, —
Because I was not near to make them
sad,
Or soil the rustling of their inno-
cence.
Adam. They know me. I am deep-
est in the guilt,
If last in the transgression.
Eve. Thou !
Adam. If God,
Who gave the right and joyaunce of
the world
Both unto thee and me, gave thee to
me, —
The best gift last, — the last sin was
the worst,
Which sinned against more comple-
ment of gifts
And grace of giving. God ! I render
back
Strong benediction and perpetual
praise
From mortal feeble lips (as incense-
smoke
Out of a little censer may fill heaven),
That thou, in striking my benumbed
hands,
And forcing them to drop all other
boons
Of beauty and dominion and delight,
Hast left this well-beloved Eve, this
life
Within life, this best gift between
their palms,
In gracious compensation.
Eve. Is it thy voice,
Or some saluting angel's, calling home
My feet into the garden ?
Adam. O my God !
I, standing here between the glory
and dark, —
The glory of thy wrath projected forth
From Eden's wall, the dark of our
distress,
Which settles a step off in that drear
world, —

Lift up to thee the hands from whence
hath fallen
Only creation's sceptre, thanking thee
That rather thou hast cast me out
with her
Than left me lorn of her in Paradise,
With angel looks and angel songs
around
To show the absence of her eyes and
voice,
And make society full desertness
Without her use in comfort.

Eve. Where is loss ?
Am I in Eden ? Can another speak
Mine own love's tongue ?

Adam. Because, with her, I stand
Upright, as far as can be in this fall,
And look away from heaven which
doth accuse,
And look away from earth which
doth convict,
Into her face, and crown my dis-
crowned brow
Out of her love, and put the thought
of her
Around me for an Eden full of birds,
And lift her body up — thus — to my
heart,
And with my lips upon her lips —
thus, thus —
Do quicken and sublimate my mortal
breath,
Which cannot climb against the
grave's steep sides,
But overtops this grief.

Eve. I am renewed
My eyes grow with the light which is
in thine;
The silence of my heart is full of
sound.
Hold me up — so ! Because I com-
prehend
This human love, I shall not be afraid
Of any human death; and yet, because
I know this strength of love, I seem
to know

Death's strength by that same sign.
Kiss on my lips,
To shut the door close on my rising
soul,
Lest it pass outwards in astonishment,
And leave thee lonely !

Adam. Yet thou liest, Eve,
Bent heavily on thyself across mine
arm,

Thy face flat to the sky.

Eve. Ay; and the tears
Running, as it might seem, my life
from me,

They run so fast and warm. Let me
lie so,
And weep so, as if in a dream or
prayer,
Unfastening, clasp by clasp, the hard
tight thought
Which clipped my heart, and showed
me evermore
Loathed of thy justice as I loathe the
snake,
And as the pure ones loathe our sin.
To-day,
All day, beloved, as we fled across
This desolating radiance cast by
swords,
Not suns, my lips prayed soundless
to myself,
Striking against each other, "O
Lord God!"
('Twas so I prayed) "I ask thee by
my sin,
And by thy curse, and by thy blame-
less heavens,
Make dreadful haste to hide me from
thy face
And from the face of my beloved
here
For whom I am no helpmeet, quick
away
Into the new dark mystery of death !
I will lie still there; I will make no
plaint;
I will not sigh, nor sob, nor speak a
word,
Nor struggle to come back beneath
the sun,
Where, peradventure, I might sin
anew
Against thy mercy and his pleasure.
Death,
Oh, death, whate'er it be, is good
enough
For such as I am; while for Adam
here,
No voice shall say again, in heaven or
earth,
It is not good for him to be alone."

Adam. And was it good for such a
prayer to pass,
My unkind Eve, betwixt our mutual
lives ?
If I am exiled, must I be bereaved ?

Eve. 'Twas an ill prayer: it shall
be prayed no more.
And God did use it like a foolishness,
Giving no answer. Now my heart
has grown
Too high and strong for such a foolish
prayer:

Love makes it strong. And since I
was the first
In the transgression, with a steady
foot
I will be first to tread from this sword-
glare
Into the outer darkness of the waste,—
And thus I do it.

Adam. Thus I follow thee,
As erewhile in the sin.—What sounds! what sounds!
I feel a music which comes straight
from heaven,
As tender as a watering dew.

Eve. I think
That angels, not those guarding Par-
adise,
But the love angels, who came erst to
us,
And, when we said "God," fainted
unawares
Back from our mortal presence unto
God,
(As if he drew them inward in a
breath.)
His name being heard of them,—I
think that they
With sliding voices lean from heaven-
ly towers,
Invisible, but gracious. Hark—how
soft!

CHORUS OF INVISIBLE ANGELS.

Faint and tender.

Mortal man and woman,
Go upon your travel!
Heaven assist the human
Smoothly to unravel
All that web of pain
Wherein ye are holden.
Do ye know our voices
Chanting down the Golden ?
Do ye guess our choice is,
Being unbehoden,
To be harkened by you yet again?

This pure door of opal
God hath shut between us,—
Us his shining people,
You who once have seen us
And are blinded new;
Yet, across the doorway,
Past the silence reaching,
Farewells evermore may,
Blessing in the teaching,
Glide from us to you.

First semichorus.
Think how erst your Eden,

Day on day succeeding,
With our presence glowed.
We came as if the heavens were bowed
To a milder music rare.
Ye saw us in our solemn treading,
Treading down the steps of
cloud,
While our wings, outspreading
Double calms of whiteness,
Dropped superfluous brightness
Down from stair to stair.

Second semichorus.
Or oft, abrupt though tender,
While ye gazed on space,
We flashed our angel-splendor
In either human face.
With mystic lilies in our hands,
From the atmospheric bands,
Breaking with a sudden grace,
We took you unaware!
While our feet struck glories
Outward, smooth and fair,
Which we stood on floorwise,
Platformed in mid-air.

First semichorus.
Or oft, when heaven descended,
Stood we in our wondering
sight
In a mute apocalypse
With dumb vibrations on our lips
From hosannas ended,
And grand half-vanishings
Of the empyreal things
Within our eyes belated,
Till the heavenly Infinite,
Falling off from the Created,
Left our inward contemplation
Opened into ministration.

Chorus.
Then upon our axle turning
Of great joy to sympathy,
We sang out the morning
Broadening up the sky;
Or we drew
Our music through
The noontide's hush and heat and
shine,
Informed with our intense Divine !

Interrupted vital notes
Palpitating hither, thither,
Burning out into the ether,
Sensible like fiery notes;
Or, whenever twilight drifted
Through the cedar masses,
The globed sun we lifted,
Trailing purple, trailing gold,
Out between the passes
Of the mountains manifold,
To anthems slowly sung !

While he, aweary, half in swoon
For joy to hear our climbing tune
Transpierce the stars' concentric
rings,—
The burden of his glory flung
In broken lights upon our wings.

[*The chant dies away con-*
fusedly, and LUCIFER
appears.

Luc. Now may all fruits be pleasant
to thy lips,
Beautiful Eve! The times have some-
what changed
Since thou and I had talk beneath a
tree,
Albeit ye are not gods yet.

Eve. Adam, hold
My right hand strongly! It is Lucifer,—

And we have love to lose.

Adam. I' the name of God,
Go apart from us, O thou Lucifer!
And leave us to the desert thou hast
made

Out of thy treason. Bring no serpent-
slime
Athwart this path kept holy to our
tears,
Or we may curse thee with their bit-
terness.

Luc. Curse freely! Curses thicken.
Why, this Eve

Who thought me once part worthy of
her ear,

And somewhat wiser than the other
beasts,—

Drawing together her large globes of
eyes,
The light of which is throbbing in and
out

Their steadfast continuity of gaze,—
Knots her fair eyebrows in so hard a
knot,

And down from her white heights of
womanhood

Looks on me so amazed, I scarce
should fear

To wager such an apple as she
plucked,

Against one riper from the tree of life,
That she could curse too—as a wo-
man may—

Smooth in the vowels.

Eve. So—speak wickedly:
I like it best so. Let thy words be
wounds,

For so I shall not fear thy power to
hurt;

Trench on the forms of good by open
ill,
For so I shall wax strong and grand
with scorn,
Scorning myself for ever trusting
thee
As far as thinking, ere a snake ate
dust,
He could speak wisdom.

Luc. Our new gods, it seems,
Deal more in thunders than in cour-
tesies.

And, sooth, mine own Olympus,
which anon
I shall build up to loud-voiced ima-
gery
From all the wandering visions of the
world,
May show worse railing than our lady

Eve
Pours o'er the rounding of her argent
arm.
But why should this be? Adam par-
doned Eve.

Adam. Adam loved Eve. Jehovah
pardoned both!

Eve. Adam forgave Eve, because
loving Eve.

Luc. So, well. Yet Adam was un-
done of Eve,
As both were by the snake: there-
fore forgive,
In like wise, fellow-temptress, the
poor snake,
Who stung there, not so poorly!

[*Aside.*

Eve. Hold thy wrath,
Beloved Adam! Let me answer him;
For this time he speaks truth, which

we should hear,
And asks for mercy, which I most

should grant,
In like wise, as he tells us, in like

wise! —
And therefore I thee pardon, Lucifer,

As freely as the streams of Eden

flowed
When we were happy by them. So,

Depart;
Leave us to walk the remnant of our

time
Out mildly in the desert. Do not seek
To harm us any more, or scoff at us,
Or, ere the dust be laid upon our face,

To find there the communion of the

dust

And issue of the dust. Go!

Adam. At once go!

Luc. Forgive ! and go ! Ye images
of clay,
Shrunk somewhat in the mould,
what jest is this ?
What words are these to use ? By
what a thought
Conceive ye of me ? Yesterday — a
snake !
To-day — what ?

Adam. A strong spirit.

Eve. A sad spirit.

Adam. Perhaps a fallen angel.—
Who shall say !

Luc. Who told thee, Adam ?

Adam. Thou ! — the prodigy
Of thy vast brows and melancholy
eyes,
Which comprehend the heights of
some great fall.
I think that thou hast one day worn a
crown
Under the eyes of God.

Luc. And why of God ?

Adam. It were no crown else.
Verily, I think
Thou'rt fallen far. I had not yesterday
Said it so surely; but I know to-day
Grief by grief, sin by sin.

Luc. A crown by a crown.

Adam. Ay, mock me ! now I know
more than I knew:
Now I know that thou art fallen be-
low hope

Of final re-ascent.

Luc. Because ?

Adam. Because
A spirit who expected to see God,
Though at the last point of a million
years,

Could dare no mockery of a ruined
man

Such as this Adam.

Luc. Who is high and bold,—
Be it said passing,—of a good red
clay

Discovered on some top of Lebanon,
Or haply of Aornus, beyond sweep
Of the black eagle's wing. A fur-
long lower

Had made a meeker king for Eden.
Soh !

Is it not possible by sin and grief
(To give the things your names) that
spirits should rise,
Instead of falling ?

Adam. Most impossible.
The Highest being the Holy and the
Glad,

Whoever rises must approach delight
And sanctity in the act.

Luc. Ha, my clay king !
Thou wilt not rule by wisdom very
long
The after-generations. Earth, me-
thinks,
Will disinherit thy philosophy
For a new doctrine suited to thine
heirs,
And class these present dogmas with
the rest
Of the old-world traditions, — Eden
fruits
And Saurian fossils.

Eve. Speak no more with him,
Beloved ! it is not good to speak with
him.—
Go from us, Lucifer, and speak no
more !
We have no pardon which thou dost
not scorn,

Nor any bliss, thou seest, for coveting,
Nor innocence for staining. Being
bereft,

We would be alone. Go !

Luc. Ah ! ye talk the same,
All of you, — spirits and clay, — Go,
and depart !

In heaven they said so, and at Eden's
gate,

And here re-iterant in the wilderness.
None saith, Stay with me, for thy face
is fair !

None saith, Stay with me, for thy
voice is sweet !

And yet I was not fashioned out of
clay.

Look on me, woman ! Am I beauti-
ful ?

Eve. Thou hast a glorious darkness.

Luc. Nothing more ?

Eve. I think no more.

Luc. False heart, thou thinkest
more !

Thou canst not choose but think, as I
praise God,

Unwillingly but fully, that I stand
Most absolute in beauty. As your-
selves

Were fashioned very good at best, so
we

Sprang very beauteous from the cre-
ant Word

Which thrilled behind us, God him-
self being moved

When that august work of a perfect
shape,

His dignities of sovran angelhood,

Swept out into the universe, divine
With thunderous movements, earnest
looks of gods,
And silver-solemn clash of cymbal
wings,
Whereof was I, in motion and in
form,
A part not poorest. And yet—yet,
perhaps,
This beauty which I speak of is not
here,
As God's voice is not here, nor even
my crown,—
I do not know. What is this thought
or thing
Which I call beauty? Is it thought
or thing?
Is it a thought accepted for a thing?
Or both? or neither?—a pretext, a
word?
Its meaning flutters in me like a flame
Under my own breath: my percep-
tions reel
Forevermore around it, and fall off,
As if it, too, were holy.

Eve. Which it is.
Adam. The essence of all beauty
I call love.

The attribute, the evidence and end,
The consummation to the inward
sense,
Of beauty apprehended from without,
I still call love. As form when
colorless
Is nothing to the eye,—that pine-tree
there,
Without its black and green, being
all a blank,—
So, without love, is beauty undis-
cerned

In man or angel. Angel! rather ask
What love is in thee, what love
moves to thee,
And what collateral love moves on
with thee;
Then shalt thou know if thou art
beautiful.

Luc. Love! what is love? I lose it.
Beauty and love
I darken to the image. Beauty—
love!

[*He fades away, while a
low music sounds.*

Adam. Thou art pale, Eve.

Eve. The precipice of ill
Down this colossal nature dizzies me:
And hark! the starry harmony re-
move

Seems measuring the heights from
whence he fell.

Adam. Think that we have not fallen
so! By the hope
And aspiration, by the love and faith,
We do exceed the stature of this
angel.

Eve. Happier we are than he is by
the death.

Adam. Or, rather, by the life of the
Lord God.

How dim the angel grows, as if that
blast
Of music swept him back into the
dark!

[*The music is stronger, gath-
ering itself into uncer-
tain articulation.*

Eve. It throbs in on us like a plain-
tive heart,
Pressing with slow pulsations, vibra-
tive,
Its gradual sweetness through the
yielding air,
To such expression as the stars may
use,
Most starry-sweet and strange. With
every note
That grows more loud the angel
grows more dim,
Receding in proportion to approach,
Until he stand afar,—a shade.

Adam. Now, words.

SONG OF THE MORNING STAR TO LUCIFER.

*He fades utterly away, and vanishes as it
proceeds.*

Mine orlèd image sinks
Back from thee, back from thee,
As thou art fallen, methinks,
Back from me, back from me.
O my light-bearer,
Could another fairer
Lack to thee, lack to thee?
Ah, ah, Heosphorus!
I loved thee with the fiery love of
stars
Who love by burning, and by loving
move
Too near the throned Jehovah not to
love.
Ah, ah, Heosphorus!
Their brows flash fast on me from
gliding cars,
Pale-passioned for my loss.
Ah, ah, Heosphorus!

Mine orbèd heats drop cold
Down from thee, down from thee,
As fell thy grace of old
Down from me, down from me.
O my light-bearer,
Is another fairer
Won to thee, won to thee?
Ah, ah, Heosphoros,
Great love preceded loss,
Known to thee, known to thee.
Ah, ah !
Thou, breathing thy communicable
grace
Of life into my light,
Mine astral faces, from thine angel
face
Hast inly fed,
And flooded me with radiance over-
much
From thy pure height.
Ah, ah !
Thou, with calm, floating pinions both
ways spread,
Erect, irradiated,
Didst sting my wheel of glory
On, on before thee, . . .
Along the Godlight, by a quickening
touch !
Ha, ha !
Around, around, the firmamental
ocean
I swam expanding with delirious fire!
Around, around, around, in blind de-
sire
To be drawn upward to the Infinite —
Ha, ha !
Until, the motion flinging out the
motion
To a keen whirl of passion and
avidity,
To a dim whirl of languor and delight,
I wound in gyrrant orbits smooth and
white
With that intense rapidity.
Around, around,
I wound and interwound,
While all the cyclic heavens about me
spun.
Stars, planets, suns, and moons di-
lated broad,
Then flashed together into a single
sun,
And wound, and wound in one:
And as they wound I wound, around,
around,
In a great fire I almost took for God.
Ha, ha, Heosphoros !

Thine angel glory sinks
Down from me, down from me:
My beauty falls, methinks,
Down from thee, down from thee.
O my light-bearer,
O my path-preparer,
Gone from me, gone from me !
Ah, ah, Heosphoros !
I cannot kindle underneath the brow
Of this new angel here who is not
thou.
All things are altered since that time
ago;
And if I shine at eve, I shall not
know.
I am strange, I am slow.
Ah, ah, Heosphoros !
Henceforward, human eyes of lovers
be
The only sweetest sight that I shall
see,
With tears between the looks raised
up to me,
Ah, ah !
When, having wept all night, at break
of day
Above the folded hills, they shall sur-
vey
My light, a little trembling, in the
gray,
Ah, ah !
And, gazing on me, such shall com-
prehend,
Through all my piteous pomp at
morn or even
And melancholy leaning out of
heaven,
That love, their own divine, may
change or end,
That love may close in loss !
Ah, ah, Heosphoros !

SCENE.—Farther on. A wild open country seen vaguely in the approaching night.

Adam. How doth the wide and mel-
ancholy earth
Gather her hills around us, gray and
ghast,
And stare with blank significance of
loss
Right in our faces ! Is the wind up ?
Ere. Nay.
Adam. And yet the cedars and the
junipers
Rock slowly, through the mist, with-
out a sound,

And shapes which have no certainty
of shape
Drift duskly in and out between the
pines,
And loom along the edges of the hills,
And lie flat, curdling in the open
ground,—
Shadows without a body, which con-
tract
And lengthen as we gaze on them.

Eve. O life,
Which is not man's nor angel's !
What is this ?

Adam. No cause for fear. The cir-
cle of God's life
Contains all life beside.

Eve. I think the earth
Is crazed with curse, and wanders
from the sense
Of those first laws affixed to form and
space
Or ever she knew sin.

Adam. We will not fear:
We were brave sinning.

Eve. Yea, I plucked the fruit
With eyes upturned to heaven, and
seeing there
Our god-thrones, as the tempter said,
not Gon.

My heart, which beat then, sinks.
The sun hath sunk
Out of sight with our Eden.

Adam. Night is near.
Eve. And God's curse nearest. Let
us travel back,
And stand within the sword-glare till
we die,
Believing it is better to meet death
Than suffer desolation.

Adam. Nay, beloved !
We must not pluck death from the
Maker's hand,
As erst we plucked the apple: we
must wait
Until he gives death, as he gave us life,
Nor murmur faintly o'er the primal
gift
Because we spoilt its sweetness with
our sin.

Eve. Ah, ah ! dost thou discern
what I behold ?

Adam. I see all. How the spirits
in thine eyes
From their dilated orbits bound be-
fore

To meet the spectral Dread !

Eve. I am afraid —
Ah, ah ! the twilight bristles wild
with shapes

Of intermittent motion, aspect vague,
And mystic bearings, which o'ercreep
the earth,
Keeping slow time with horrors in
the blood.
How near they reach . . . and far !
How gray they move,
Treading upon the darkness without
feet,
And fluttering on the darkness with-
out wings !
Some run like dogs, with noses to the
ground;
Some keep one path, like sheep; some
rock, like trees;
Some glide, like a fallen leaf; and
some flow on,
Copious as rivers.

Adam. Some spring up like fire;
And some coil . . .

Eve. Ah, ah ! dost thou pause to say
Like what ? — coil like the serpent,
when he fell
From all the emerald splendor of his
height
And writhed, and could not climb
against the curse, —
Not a ring's length. I am afraid —
afraid —

I think it is God's will to make me
afraid,
Permitting THESE to haunt us in the
place
Of his beloved angels, gone from us
Because we are not pure. Dear pity
of God,

That didst permit the angels to go
home,
And live no more with us who are not
pure,

Save us, too, from a loathly company,
Almost as loathly in our eyes, per-
haps,

As we are in the purest ! Pity us, —

Us too ! nor shut us in the dark,
away

From verity and from stability,
Or what we name such through the
precedence

Of earth's adjusted uses ! leave us
not
To doubt, betwixt our senses and our
souls,

Which are the more distraught, and
full of pain,

And weak of apprehension !

Adam. Courage, sweet !
The mystic shapes ebb back from us,
and drop

With slow concentric movement, each
on each,
Expressing wider spaces, and col-
lapsed
In lines more definite for imagery
And clearer for relation, till the
throng
Of shapeless spectra merge into a few
Distinguishable phantasms vague and
grand,
Which sweep out and around us
vastly,
And hold us in a circle and a calm.

Eve. Strange phantasms of pale
shadow! there are twelve.
Thou who didst name all lives, hast
names for these?

Adam. Methinks this is the zodiac
of the earth,
Which rounds us with a visionary
dread,
Responding with twelve shadowy
signs of earth,
In fantasque apposition and ap-
proach,
To those celestial, constellated twelve
Which palpitate adown the silent
nights

Under the pressure of the hand of God
Stretched wide in benediction. At
this hour

Not a star pricketh the flat gloom of
heaven;
But, girdling close our nether wilder-
ness,
The zodiac-figures of the earth loom
slow,
Drawn out, as suiteth with the place
and time,
In twelve colossal shades, instead of
stars,
Through which the ecliptic line of
mystery
Strikes bleakly with an unrelenting
scope,
Foreshowing life and death.

Eve. By dream, or sense,
Do we see this?

Adam. Our spirits have climbed
high
By reason of the passion of our grief,
And from the top of sense looked
over sense,
To the significance and heart of
things,
Rather than things themselves.

Eve. And the dim twelve . . .

Adam. Are dim exponents of the
creature-life,

As earth contains it. Gaze on them,
beloved!

By stricter apprehension of the sight,
Suggestions of the creatures shall
assuage

The terror of the shadows; what is
known

Subduing the unknown, and taming
it

From all prodigious dread. That
phantasm, there,
Presents a lion, albeit twenty times
As large as any lion, with a roar
Set soundless in his vibratory jaws,
And a strange horror stirring in his
mane.

And there a pendulous shadow seems
to weigh,—

Good against ill, perchance; and
there a crab
Puts coldly out its gradual shadow-
claws,

Like a slow blot that spreads, till all
the ground
Crawled over by it seems to crawl
itself.

A bull stands horned here, with gib-
bous glooms;
And a ram likewise; and a scorpion
writhes

Its tail in ghastly slime, and stings the
dark.

This way a goat leaps with wild
blank of beard;

And here fantastic fishes dusky float,
Using the calm for waters, while their
fins

Throb out quick rhythms along the
shallow air.

While images more human—

Eve. How he stands,
That phantasm of a man—who is
not thou!

Two phantasms of two men!

Adam. One that sustains,
And one that strives, resuming, so,
the ends
Of manhood's curse of labor.¹ Dost
thou see

¹ Adam recognizes in *Aquarius* the water-bearer, and *Sagittarius* the archer, distinct types of the man bearing and the man combating,—the passive and active forms of human labor. I hope that the preceding zodiacal signs—transferred to the earthly shadow and representative purpose of *Aries*, *Taurus*, *Cancer*, *Leo*, *Libra*, *Scorpio*, *Capricornus*, and *Pisces*, are sufficiently obvious to the reader.

That phantasm of a woman?
Eve. I have seen;
 But look off to those small humani-
 ties¹
 Which draw me tenderly across my
 fear—
 Lesser and fainter than my woman-
 hood,
 Or yet thy manhood—with strange
 innocence
 Set in the misty lines of head and
 hand.
 They lean together! I would gaze on
 them
 Longer and longer, till my watching
 eyes,
 As the stars do in watching any
 thing,
 Should light them forward from their
 outline vague
 To clear configuration.

[*Two spirits, of organic and inorganic
 nature, arise from the ground.*]

But what shapes
 Rise up between us in the open space,
 And thrust me into horror, back from
 hope!

Adam. Colossal shapes—twin sven-
 ran images,
 With a disconsolate, blank majesty
 Set in their wondrous faces; with no
 look,
 And yet an aspect,—a significance
 Of individual life and passionate
 ends,
 Which overcomes us gazing.

O bleak sound!
 O shadow of sound! O phantasm of
 thin sound!
 How it comes, wheeling, as the pale
 moth wheels,—
 Wheeling and wheeling in continu-
 ous wail
 Around the cyclic zodiac, and gains
 force,
 And gathers, settling coldly like a
 moth,
 On the wan faces of these images
 We see before us, whereby modified,
 It draws a straight line of articulate
 song
 From out that spiral faintness of la-
 ment,
 And by one voice expresses many
 griefs.

¹ Her maternal instinct is excited by *Gemini*.

First Spirit.
 I am the spirit of the harmless earth,
 God spake me softly out among the
 stars,—
 As softly as a blessing of much worth;
 And then his smile did follow, un-
 aware,
 That all things fashioned so for use
 and duty
 Might shine anointed with his chrism
 of beauty—
 Yet I wail!
 I drove on with the worlds exult-
 ingly,
 Obliquely down the Godlight's
 gradual fall;
 Individual aspect and complexity
 Of gyratory orb and interval
 Lost in the fluent motion of delight
 Toward the high ends of Being be-
 yond sight—
 Yet I wail!

Second Spirit.
 I am the spirit of the harmless beasts,
 Of flying things, and creeping
 things, and swimming;
 Of all the lives, erst set at silent
 feasts,
 That found the love-kiss on the gob-
 let brimming,
 And tasted in each drop within the
 measure
 The sweetest pleasure of their Lord's
 good pleasure—
 Yet I wail!

What a full hum of life around his lips
 Bore witness to the fulness of crea-
 tion!
 How all the grand words were full-
 laden ships,
 Each sailing onward from enuncia-
 tion
 To separate existence, and each bear-
 ing
 The creature's power of joying, hop-
 ing, fearing!—
 Yet I wail!

Eve. They wail, beloved! they speak
 of glory and God,
 And they wail—wail. That burden
 of the song
 Drops from it like its fruit, and heavi-
 ly falls
 Into the lap of silence.

Adam. Hark, again!
First Spirit.
 I was so beautiful, so beautiful,
 My joy stood up within me bold to
 add

A word to God's, and, when his
work was full,
To "very good," responded "very
glad!"
Filtered through roses, did the light
enclose me,
And bunches of the grape swam blue
across me—
 Yet I wail!

Second Spirit.
I bounded with my panthers: I re-
joiced
In my young tumbling lions rolled
together:
My stag, the river at his fetlocks,
poised,
Then dipped his antlers through the
golden weather
In the same ripple which the alliga-
tor
Left, in his joyous troubling of the
water—
 Yet I wail!

First Spirit.
O my deep waters, cataract and flood,
What wordless triumph did your
voices render!
O mountain-summits, where the an-
gels stood,
And shook from head and wing
thick dews of splendor!
How with a holy quiet did your
Earthly
Accept that Heavenly, knowing yo
were worthy!—
 Yet I wail!

Second Spirit.
O my wild wood-dogs, with your lis-
tening eyes;
My horses; my ground-eagles, for
swift fleeing;
My birds, with viewless wing of har-
monies;
My calm cold fishes of a silver
being,—
How happy were ye, living and pos-
sessing,
O fair half-souls capacious of full
blessing!—
 Yet I wail!

First Spirit.
I wail, I wail! Now hear my charge
to-day,
Thou man, thou woman, marked as
the misdoers
By God's sword at your backs! I
lent my clay
To make your bodies, which had
grown more flowers;

And now, in change for what I lent,
ye give me
The thorn to vex, the tempest-fire to
cleave me—
 And I wail!

Second Spirit.
I wail, I wail! Behold ye, that I
fasten
My sorrow's fang upon your souls
dishonored?
Accursed transgressors! down the
steep ye hasten,
Your crown's weight on the world,
to drag it downward
Unto your ruin. Lo! my lions scent-
ing
The blood of wars, roar hoarse and
unrelenting—
 And I wail!

First Spirit.
I wail, I wail! Do you hear that I
wail?
I had no part in your transgression
—none.
My roses on the bough did bud, not
pale;
My rivers did not loiter in the sun;
I was obedient. Wherefore in my
centre
Do I thrill at this curse of death and
winter?—
 Do I wail?

Second Spirit.
I wail, I wail! I wail in the assault
Of undeserved perdition, sorely
wounded!
My nightingale sang sweet without a
fault;
My gentle leopards innocently
bounded.
We were obedient. What is this con-
vulses
Our blameless life with pangs and
fever-pulses?—
 And I wail!

Eve. I choose God's thunder and
his angels' swords
To die by, Adam, rather than such
words.

Let us pass out, and flee.
Adam. We cannot flee.
This zodiac of the creatures' cruelty
Curls round us, like a river cold and
drear,
And shuts us in, constraining us to
hear.

First Spirit.
I feel your steps, O wandering sin-
ners, strike

A sense of death to me, and undug graves !
 The heart of earth, once calm, is trembling like
 The ragged foam along the ocean-waves;
 The restless earthquakes rock against each other;
 The elements moan round me, "Mother, mother"—
 And I wail !

Second Spirit.
 Your melancholy looks do pierce me through;
 Corruption swathes the paleness of your beauty.
 Why have ye done this thing ? What did we do
 That we should fall from bliss, as ye from duty ?
 Wild shriek the hawks, in waiting for their jesses,
 Fierce howl the wolves along the wildernesses—
 And I wail !

Adam. To thee, the Spirit of the harmless earth,
 To thee, the Spirit of earth's harmless lives,
 Inferior creatures, but still innocent,
 Be salutation from a guilty mouth
 Yet worthy of some audience and respect
 From you who are not guilty. If we have sinned,
 God hath rebuked us, who is over us
 To give rebuke or death, and if ye wail
 Because of any suffering from our sin,—
 Ye who are under and not over us,— Be satisfied with God, if not with us,
 And pass out from our presence in such peace

As we have left you, to enjoy revenge Such as the heavens have made you.

Verily, There must be strife between us large as sin.
Eve. No strife, mine Adam ! Let us not stand high Upon the wrong we did to reach disdain,
 Who rather should be humbler evermore,
 Since self-made sadder. Adam, shall I speak,
 I who spake once to such a bitter end,—

Shall I speak humbly now, who once was proud ?
 I, schooled by sin to more humility Than thou hast, O mine Adam, O my king,—
My king, if not the world's ?
Adam. Speak as thou wilt.
Eve. Thus, then, my hand in thine—
 . . . Sweet, dreadful Spirits ! I pray you humbly, in the name of God,
 Not to say of these tears, which are impure—
 Grant me such pardoning grace as can go forth From clean volitions toward a spotted will,
 From the wronged to the wronger, this and no more !
 I do not ask more. I am 'ware, indeed, That absolute pardon is impossible From you to me, by reason of my sin ;
 And that I cannot evermore, as once, With worthy acceptation of pure joy, Behold the trances of the holy hills Beneath the leaning stars, or watch the vales Dew-pallid with their morning ecstasy ;
 Or hear the winds make pastoral peace between Two grassy uplands; and the river-wells Work out their bubbling mysteries underground ; And all the birds sing, till, for joy of song, They lift their trembling wings as if to heave The too-much weight of music from their heart And float it up the ether. I am 'ware That these things I can no more apprehend With a pure organ into a full delight, The sense of beauty and of melody Being no more aided in me by the sense Of personal adjustment to those heights Of what I see well formed, or hear well tuned, But rather coupled darkly, and made ashamed By my perciency of sin and fall In melancholy of humiliant thoughts.

But, oh ! fair, dreadful Spirits — albeit
this,
Your accusation must confront my
soul,
And your pathetic utterance and full
gaze
Must evermore subdue me, — be con-
tent !
Conquer me gently, as if pitying me,
Not to say loving; let my tears fall
thick
As watering dews of Eden, unre-
proached;
And, when your tongues reprove me,
make me smooth,
Not ruffled, — smooth and still with
your reproof,
And, peradventure, better while more
sad.
For look to it, sweet Spirits, look well
to it,
It will not be amiss in you, who kept
The law of your own righteousness,
and keep
The right of your own griefs to
mourn themselves,
To pity me twice fallen, — from that
and this,
From joy of place, and also right of
wail;
“I wail,” being not for me, — only
“I sin.”
Look to it, O sweet Spirits !

For was I not,
At that last sunset seen in Paradise,
When all the westering clouds flashed
out in throngs
Of sudden angel-faces, face by face,
All hushed and solemn, as a thought
of God
Held them suspended, — was I not,
that hour,
The lady of the world, princess of
life,
Mistress of feast and favor ? Could
I touch
A rose with my white hand, but it be-
came
redder at once ? Could I walk leis-
urely
Along our swarded garden, but the
grass
Tracked me with greenness ? Could
I stand aside
A moment underneath a cornel-tree,
But all the leaves did tremble as
alive
With songs of fifty birds who were
made glad

Because I stood there ? Could I turn
to look
With these twain eyes of mine, — now
weeping fast,
Now good for only weeping, — upon
man,
Angel, or beast, or bird, but each re-
joiced
Because I looked on him ? Alas,
alas !
And is not this much woe, — to cry
“Alas !”
Speaking of joy ? And is not this
more shame, —
To have made the woe myself, from
all that joy ?
To have stretched my hand, and
plucked it from the tree,
And chosen it for fruit ? Nay, is not
this
Still most despair, — to have halved
that bitter fruit,
And ruined so the sweetest friend
I have,
Turning the GREATEST to mine ene-
my ?

Adam. I will not hear thee speak
so. Hearken, Spirits !
Our God, who is the enemy of none,
But only of their sin, hath set your
hope
And my hope in a promise on this
head.
Show reverence, then, and never
bruise her more
With unpermitted and extreme re-
proach,
Lost, passionate in anguish, she fling
down
Beneath your trampling feet God's
gift to us
Of sovereignty by reason and freewill,
Sinning against the province of the
soul
To rule the soulless. Reverence her
estate,
And pass out from her presence with
no words.

Eve. O dearest heart, have patience
with my heart !
O Spirits, have patience, 'stead of rev-
erence,
And let me speak; for, not being in-
nocent,
It little doth become me to be proud,
And I am prescient by the very
hope
And promise set upon me, that hence-
forth

Only my gentleness shall make me great,
My humbleness exalt me. Awful Spirits,
Be witness that I stand in your re-proof
But one sun's length off from my happiness—
Happy, as I have said, to look around,
Clear to look up! — and now! I need not speak —
Ye see me what I am; ye scorn me so,
Because ye see me what I have made myself
From God's best making! Alas, — peace foregone,
Love wronged, and virtue forfeit, and tears wept
Upon all, vainly! Alas, me! alas, Who have undone myself from all that best,
Fairest, and sweetest, to this wretchedest,
Saddest, and most defiled — cast out, cast down —
What word metes absolute loss? Let absolute loss
Suffice you for revenge. For I, who lived
Beneath the wings of angels yesterday,
Wander to-day beneath the roofless world:
I, reigning the earth's empress yesterday,
Put off from me to-day your hate with prayers:
I, yesterday, who answered the Lord God,
Composed and glad as singing-birds the sun,
Might shriek now from our dismal desert, "God,"
And hear him make reply, "What is thy need,—
Thou whom I cursed to-day?"

Adam. *Eve!*
Eve. *I, at last,*

Who yesterday was helpmate and delight
Unto mine Adam, am to-day the grief And curse-meet for him. And so pity us,
Ye gentle Spirits, and pardon him and me;
And let some tender peace, made of our pain,
Grow up betwixt us, as a tree might grow,

With boughs on both sides! in the shade of which, When presently ye shall behold us dead,
For the poor sake of our humility Breathe out your pardon on our breathless lips,
And drop your twilight dews against our brows,
And stroking with mild airs our harmless hands Left empty of all fruit, perceive your love
Distilling through your pity over us, And suffer it, self-reconciled, to pass !

LUCIFER rises in the circle.

Luc. Who talks here of a complement of grief?
Of expiation wrought by loss and fall?
Of hate subduable to pity? *Eve?* Take counsel from thy counsellor the snake,
And boast no more in grief, nor hope from pain,
My docile Eve! I teach you to despise,
Who taught you disobedience. Look around!
Earth-spirits and phantasms hear you talk unmoved,
As if ye were red clay again, and talked.
What are your words to them? your grief to them?
Your deaths, indeed, to them? Did the hand pause
For their sake, in the plucking of the fruit,
That they should pause for *you* in hating you?
Or will your grief or death, as did your sin,
Bring change upon their final doom?
Behold,
Your grief is but your sin in the rebound,
And cannot expiate for it.
Adam. That is true.
Luc. Ay; that is true. The clay king testifies To the snake's counsel, — hear him! — very true.
Earth-spirits. I wail, I wail!
Luc. And certes, that is true. Ye wail, ye all wail. Peradventure I Could wail among you. O thou universe,

That holdest sin and woe,— more room for wail!

Distant Starry Voice. Ah, ah, Heosphorus! Heosphorus!

Adam. Mark Lucifer! He changes awfully.

Eve. It seems as if he looked from grief to God,

And could not see him. Wretched Lucifer!

Adam. How he stands — yet an angel!

Earth-spirits. We all wail!

Luc. (after a pause). Dost thou remember, Adam, when the curse Took us in Eden? On a mountain-peak

Half-sheathed in primal woods, and glittering

In spasms of awful sunshine at that hour,

A lion couched, part raised upon his paws,

With his calm, massive face turned full on thine,

And his mane listening. When the ended curse

Left silence in the world, right suddenly

He sprang up rampant, and stood straight and stiff,

As if the new reality of death Were dashed against his eyes, and roared so fierce,

(Such thick carnivorous passion in his throat

Tearing a passage through the wrath and fear)

And roared so wild, and smote from all the hills

Such fast keen echoes crumbling down the vales

Precipitately,—that the forest beasts, One after one, did mutter a response Of savage and of sorrowful complaint

Which trailed along the gorges. Then, at once,

He fell back, and rolled crashing from the height

Into the dusk of pines.

Adam. It might have been. I heard the curse alone.

Earth-spirits. I wail, I wail!

Luc. That lion is the type of what I am.

And as he fixed thee with his full-faced hate,

And roared O Adam, comprehending doom,

So, gazing on the face of the Unseen, I cry out here between the heavens and earth

My conscience of this sin, this woe, this wrath,

Which damn me to this depth.

Earth-spirits. I wail, I wail!

Eve. I wail—O God!

Luc. I scorn you that ye wail, Who use your petty griefs for pedestals

To stand on, beckoning pity from without,

And deal in pathos of antithesis Of what ye were forsooth, and what ye are!—

I scorn you like an angel! Yet one cry

I, too, would drive up like a column erect,

Marble to marble, from my heart to heaven,

A monument of anguish to transpierce And overtop your vapory complaints Expressed from feeble woes.

Earth-spirits. I wail, I wail!

Luc. For, O ye heavens, ye are my witnesses,

That I, struck out from nature in a blot,

The outcast and the mildew of things good,

The leper of angels, the excepted dust Under the common rain of daily gifts,—

I the snake, I the tempter, I the cursed,—

To whom the highest and the lowest alike

Say, Go from us: we have no need of thee,—

Was made by God like others. Good and fair

He did create me! ask him if not fair;

Ask if I caught not fair and silverly His blessing for chief angels on my head

Until it grew there, a crown crystallized;

Ask if he never called me by my name, Lucifer, kindly said as "Gabriel"—

Lucifer, soft as "Michael!" while serene

I, standing in the glory of the lamps, Answered, "My Father," innocent of shame

And of the sense of thunder. Hat ye think,

White angels in your niches, I repented,
And would tread down my own offences back
To service at the footstool? That's read wrong!
I cry as the beast did, that I may cry expansive, not appealing! Fallen so deep,
Against the sides of this prodigious pit
I cry, cry, dashing out the hands of wail
On each side, to meet anguish everywhere,
And to attest it in the ecstasy
And exaltation of a woe sustained,
Because provoked and chosen.
 Pass along
Your wilderness, vain mortals! Put thy griefs
In transitory shapes, be henceforth dwarfed
To your own conscience by the dread extremes
Of what I am and have been. If ye have fallen,
It is but a step's fall, the whole ground beneath
Strewn woolly soft with promise: if ye have sinned,
Your prayers tread high as angels; if ye have grieved,
Ye are too mortal to be pitiable:
The power to die disproves the right to grieve.
Go to! Ye call this ruin? I half scorn
The ill I did you! Were ye wronged by me,
Hated and tempted and undone of me,
Still, what's your hurt to mine of doing hurt,
Of hating, tempting, and so ruining?
This sword's *hilt* is the sharpest, and cuts through
The hand that yields it.
 Goe! I curse you all.
Hate one another,—feebly,—as ye can!
I would not certes cut you short in hate:
Far be it from me! Hate on as ye can!
I breathe into your faces, Spirits of earth,
As wintry blast may breathe on wintry leaves,

And, lifting up their brownness, show beneath
The branches bare. Beseech you, Spirits, give
To Eve, who beggarly entreats your love
For her and Adam when they shall be dead,
An answer rather fitting to the sin Than to the sorrow, as the heavens, I trow,
For justice' sake gave theirs.
 I curse you both, Adam and Eve. Say grace, as after meat,
After my curses. May your tears fall hot
On all the hissing scorns o' the creatures here—
And yet rejoice! Increase and multiply,
Ye in your generations, in all plagues, Corruptions, melancholies, povertyes,
And hideous forms of life and fears of death,
The thought of death being alway eminent,
Immovable, and dreadful in your life,
And deafly and dumbly insignificant Of any hope beyond, as death itself,
Whichever of you lieth dead the first, Shall seem to the survivor, yet rejoice!
My curse catch at you strongly, body and soul,
And HE find no redemption, nor the wing
Of seraph move your way—and yet rejoice!—
Rejoice, because ye have not set in you
This hate which shall pursue you,—this fire-hate
Which glares without, because it burns within;
Which kills from ashes,—this potential hate,
Wherein I, angel, in antagonism To God and his reflex beatitudes,
Moan ever in the central universe With the great woe of striving against Love,
And gasp for space amid the Infinite, And toss for rest amid the Desertness,
Self-orphaned by my will, and self-elect
To kingship of resistant agony

Toward the Good round me, hating
good and love,
And willing to hate good and to hate
love,

And willing to will on so evermore,
Scorning the Past, and damning the
To come —

Go and rejoice ! — I curse you.
[LUCIFER vanishes.]

Earth-spirits.

And we scorn you ! There's no par-
don

Which can lean to you aright.

When your bodies take the guerdon
Of the death-curse in our sight,
Then the bee that hummeth lowest
shall transcend you;

Then ye shall not move an eyelid,
Though the stars look down your
eyes;

And the earth which ye defiled
Shall expose you to the skies, —
“Lo ! these kings of ours, who sought
to comprehend you.”

First Spirit.

And the elements shall boldly
All your dust to dust constrain.

Unrestedly and coldly

I will smite you with my rain.
From the slowest of my frosts is no
receding.

Second Spirit.

And my little worm, appointed
To assume a royal part,
He shall reign, crowned and anoint-
ed,

O'er the noble human heart.
Give him counsel against losing of
that Eden !

Adam. Do ye scorn us ? Back your
scorn

Toward your faces gray and lorn,
As the wind drives back the rain,
Thus I drive with passion-strife, —
I, who stand beneath God's sun,
Made like God, and, though un-
done,

Not unmade for love and life.

Lo ! ye utter threats in vain.
By my free will that chose sin,
By mine agony within

Round the passage of the fire,
By the pinings which disclose

That my native soul is higher

Than what it chose,

We are yet too high, O Spirits, for
your disdain.

Eve. Nay, beloved ! If these be
low,

We confront them from no height.
We have stooped down to their
level

By infecting them with evil,
And their scorn that meets our blow
Scathes aright.

Amen. Let it be so.

Earth-spirits.

We shall triumph, triumph greatly,
When ye lie beneath the sward.
There our lily shall grow stately,
Though ye answer not a word,
And her fragrance shall be scornful of
your silence:

While your throne ascending calm-
ly,

We, in heirdom of your soul,
Flash the river, lift the palm-tree,
The dilated ocean roll,
By the thoughts that throbbed within
you, round the islands.

Alp and torrent shall inherit
Your significance of will,
And the grandeur of your spirit
Shall our broad savannahs fill;
In our winds your exultations shall
be springing.

Even your parlance, which inve-
giles,

By our rudeness shall be won.
Hearts poetic in our eagles
Shall beat up against the sun,
And strike downward in articulate
clear singing.

Your bold speeches our Behemoth
With his thunderous jaw shall
wield.

Your high fancies shall our Mam-
moth

Breathe sublimely up the shield
Of St. Michael at God's throne, who
waits to speed him,
Till the heavens' smooth-grooved
thunder,
Spinning back, shall leave them
clear,

And the angels, smiling wonder
With dropt looks from sphere to
sphere,

Shall cry, “Ho, ye heirs of Adam ! ye
exceed him.”

Adam. Root out thine eyes, sweet,
from the dreary ground !
Beloved, we may be overcome by
God,

But not by these.

Eve. By God, perhaps, in these.

Adam. I think not so. Had God foredoomed despair,
He had not spoken hope. He may destroy

Certes, but not deceive.

Eve. Behold this rose ! I plucked it in our bower of Paradise This morning, as I went forth, and my heart

Has beat against its petals all the day.

I thought it would be always red and full,

As when I plucked it. Is it ? Ye may see.

I cast it down to you that ye may see, All of you ! Count the petals lost of it,

And note the colors fainted ! Ye may see !

And I am as it is, who yesterday Grew in the same place. Oh ye Spirits of earth,

I almost, from my miserable heart, Could here upbraid you for your cruel heart,

Which will not let me, down the slope of death,

Draw any of your pity after me, Or lie still in the quiet of your looks,

As my flower, there, in mine.

[A bleak wind, quickened with indistinct human voices, spins around the earth-zodiac, filling the circle with its presence, and then, wailing off into the east, carries the rose away with it. Eve falls upon her face.

ADAM stands erect.

Adam. So, verily, The last departs.

Eve. So memory follows hope, And life both. Love said to me, "Do not die,"

And I replied, "O Love, I will not die."

I exiled and I will not orphan Love." But now it is no choice of mine to die:

My heart throbs from me.

Adam. Call it straightway back ! Death's consummation crowns com-

pleted life,

Or comes too early. Hope being set on thee,

For others, if for others, then for thee,—

For thee and me.

[The wind revolves from the east, and

round again to the east, perfumed by the Eden-rose, and full of voices which sweep out into articulation as they pass.

Let thy soul shake its leaves To feel the mystic wind — hark !

Eve. I hear life. *Infant Voices passing in the wind.*

Oh, we live ! oh, we live !

And this life that we receive Is a warm thing and a new,

Which we softly bud into From the heart and from the brain,

Something strange that overmuch is Of the sound and of the sight,

Flowing round in trickling touches, With a sorrow and delight;

Yet is it all in vain ?

Rock us softly, Lest it be all in vain.

Youthful Voices passing.

Oh, we live ! oh, we live !

And this life that we achieve Is a loud thing and a bold,

Which, with pulses manifold, Strikes the heart out full and faint, —

Active door, noble liver,

Strong to struggle, sure to conquer,

Though the vessel's prow will quiver At the lifting of the anchor;

Yet do we strive in vain ?

Infant Voices passing.

Rock us softly, Lest it be all in vain.

Poet Voices passing.

Oh, we live ! oh, we live !

And this life that we conceive Is a clear thing and a fair,

Which we set in crystal air That its beauty may be plain,

With a breathing and a flooding

Of the heaven-life on the whole, While we hear the forests budding

To the music of the soul;

Yet is it tuned in vain ?

Infant Voices passing.

Rock us softly, Lest it be all in vain.

Philosophic Voices passing.

Oh, we live ! oh, we live !

And this life that we perceive Is a great thing and a grave,

Which for others' use we have,

Duty-laden to remain.

We are helpers, fellow-creatures,

Of the right against the wrong,

We are earnest-hearted teachers

Of the truth which maketh strong

Yet do we teach in vain ?

Infant Voices passing.

Rock us softly,

Lest it be all in vain.

Revel Voices passing.

Oh, we live ! oh, we live !

And this life that we reprove

Is a low thing and a light,

Which is jested out of sight,

And made worthy of disdain.

Strike with bold electric laughter

The high tops of things divine:

Turn thy head, my brother, after,

Lest thy tears fall in my wine;

For is all laughed in vain?

Infant Voices passing.

Rock us softly,

Lest it be all in vain.

Eve. I hear a sound of life,—of life

like ours,

Of laughter and of wailing, of grave

speech,

Of little plaintive voices innocent,

Of life in separate courses, flowing

out

Like our four rivers to some outward

main.

I hear life—life!

Adam. And so thy cheeks have

snatched

Scarlet to paleness, and thine eyes

drink fast

Of glory from full cups, and thy moist

lips

Seem trembling, both of them, with

earnest doubts

Whether to utter words, or only

smile.

Eve. Shall I be mother of the com-

ing life?

Hear the steep generations, how they

fall

Adown the visionary stairs of Time

Like supernatural thunders, far, yet

near,

Sowing their fiery echoes through the

hills!

Am I a cloud to these,—mother to

these?

Earth-spirits. And bringer of the

curse upon all these.

[*Eve sinks down again.*

Poet Voices passing,

Oh, we live ! oh, we live !

And this life that we conceive

Is a noble thing and high,

Which we climb up loftily

To view God without a stain,

Till, recoiling where the shade is,

We retread our steps again,

And descend the gloomy Hades

To resume man's mortal pain.

Shall it be climbed in vain ?

Infant Voices passing.

Rock us softly,

Lest it be all in vain.

Love Voices passing.

Oh, we live ! oh, we live !

And this life we would retrieve

Is a faithful thing apart

Which we love in, heart to heart,

Until one heart fitteth twain.

"Wilt thou be one with me?"

"I will be one with thee."

"Ha, ha! we love and live!"

Alas! ye love and die.

Shriek—who shall reply ?

For is it not loved in vain ?

Infant Voices passing.

Rock us softly,

Though it be all in vain.

Aged Voices passing.

Oh, we live ! oh, we live !

And this life we would sur-

vive

Is a gloomy thing and brief,

Which, consummated in grief,

Leaveth ashes for all gain.

Is it not all in vain ?

Infant Voices passing.

Rock us softly,

Though it be all in vain.

[*Voice die away.*

Earth-spirits. And bringer of the

curse upon all these.

Eve. The voices of foreshown hu-

manity

Die off: so let me die.

Adam. So let us die,

When God's will soundeth the right

hour of death.

Earth-spirits. And bringer of the

curse upon all these.

Eve. O Spirits! by the gentleness

ye use

In winds at night, and floating clouds

at noon,

In gliding waters under lily-leaves,

In chirp of crickets, and the settling

hush

A bird makes in her nest with feet

and wings,—

Fulfil your natures now!

Earth-spirits. Agreed, allowed !

We gather out our natures like a

cloud,

And thus fulfil their lightnings !

Thus, and thus !

Harken, oh, barken to us !

First Spirit.

As the storm-wind blows bleakly
from the norland,
As the snow-wind beats blindly on
the moorland,
As the simeon drives hot across the
desert,
As the thunder roars deep in the
Unmeasured,
As the torrent tears the ocean-world
to atoms,
As the whirlpool grinds it fathoms
below fathoms,
Thus—and thus!

Second Spirit.

As the yellow toad, that spits its poi-
son chilly,
As the tiger in the jungle crouching
stilly,
As the wild boar, with ragged tusks
of anger,
As the wolf-dog, with teeth of glitter-
ing clangor,
As the vultures, that scream against
the thunder,
As the owlets, that sit, and moan
asunder;

Thus—and thus!

Eve. Adam ! God !

Adam. Cruel, unrelenting Spirits !
By the power in me of the sovran soul,
Whose thoughts keep pace yet with
the angel's march,
I charge you into silence, trample
you
Down to obedience. I am king of
you !

Earth-spirits.

Ha, ha ! thou art king !
With a sin for a crown,
And a soul undone !
Thou, the antagonized,
Tortured, and agonized,
Held in the ring
Of the zodiac !
Now, king, beware !
We are many and strong,
Whom thou standest among ;
And we press on the air,
And we stifle thee back,
And we multiply where
Thou wouldest trample us down
From rights of our own
To an utter wrong,
And from under the feet of thy
scorn,

O forlorn,
We shall spring up like corn,
And our stubble be strong.

Adam. God, there is power in thee !
I make appeal
Unto thy kingship.

Eve. There is pity in **THEE**,
O sinned against, great God ! My
seed, my seed,
There is hope set on **THEE**,—I cry to
thee,
Thou mystic Seed that shalt be ! —
leave us not
In agony beyond what we can bear,
Fallen in debasement below thunder-
mark,
A mark for scorning, taunted and
perplexed
By all these creatures we ruled yes-
terday,
Whom thou, Lord, rulest alway ! O
my Seed,
Through the tempestous years that
rain so thick
Betwixt my ghostly vision and thy
face,
Let me have token ! for my soul is
bruised
Before the serpent's head is.

[A vision of CHRIST appears in the
midst of the zodiac, which pales be-
fore the heavenly light. The Earth-
spirits grow grayer and fainter.

CHRIST. I AM HERE !

Adam. This is God ! Curse us not,
God, any more !

Eve. But gazing so, so, with om-
nifitc eyes,
Lift my soul upward till it touch thy
feet !

Or lift it only—not to seem too
proud—
To the low height of some good
angel's feet,
For such to tread on when he walketh
straight,

And thy lips praise him !

CHRIST. Spirits of the earth,
I meet you with rebuke for the re-
proach

And cruel and unmitigated blame
Ye cast upon your masters. True,
they have sinned;
And true their sin is reckoned into
loss

For you the sinless. Yet your inno-
cence,
Which of you praises ? since God
made your acts
Inherent in your lives, and bound
your hands

With instincts and imperious sanctities
From self-defacement. Which of you disdains
These sinners, who in falling proved their height
Above you by their liberty to fall ?
And which of you complains of loss by them,
For whose delight and use ye have your life
And honor in creation ? Ponder it !
This regent and sublime Humanity,
Though fallen, exceeds you ! this shall film your sun,
Shall hunt your lightning to its lair of cloud,
Turn back your rivers, footpath all your seas,
Lay flat your forests, master with a look
Your lion at his fasting, and fetch down
Your eagle flying. Nay, without this law
Of mandom, ye would perish, — beast by beast
Devouring, — tree by tree, with strangling roots
And trunks set tuskwise. Ye would gaze on God
With imperceptive blankness up the stars,
And mutter, " Why, God, hast thou made us thus ?"
And, pining to a sallow idiocy,
Stagger up blindly against the ends of life,
Then stagnate into rottenness, and drop
Heavily — poor, dead matter — piecemeal down
The abysmal spaces, like a little stone
Let fall to chaos. Therefore over you receive man's sceptre ! therefore be content
To minister with voluntary grace
And melancholy pardon every rite
And function in you to the human hand !
Be ye to man as angels are to God, — Servants in pleasure, singers of delight,
Suggesters to his soul of higher things
Than any of your highest ! So at last, He shall look round on you with lids too straight
To hold the grateful tears, and thank you well,

And bless you when he prays his secret prayers,
And praise you, when he sings his open songs,
For the clear song-note he has learnt in you
Of purifying sweetness, and extend Across your head his golden fantasies
Which glorify you into soul from sense.
Go, serve him for such price ! That not in vain,
Nor yet ignobly, ye shall serve, I place My word here for an oath, mine oath for act
To be hereafter. In the name of which Perfect redemption and perpetual grace
I bless you through the hope and through the peace
Which are mine, — to the love which is myself.
Eve. Speak on still, Christ ! Albeit thou bless me not
In set words, I am blessed in harkening thee —
Speak, Christ !
Christ. Speak, Adam ! Bless the woman, man.
It is thine office.
Adam. Mother of the world, Take heart before this Presence ! Lo, my voice,
Which, naming erst the creatures, did express
(God breathing through my breath) the attributes
And instincts of each creature in its name,
Floats to the same afflatus, — floats and heaves,
Like a water-weed that opens to a wave,
A full-leaved prophecy affecting thee, Out fairly and wide. Henceforward arise, aspire
To all the calms and magnanimities, The lofty uses and the noble ends,
The sanctified devotion and full work, To which thou art elect forevermore,
First woman, wife, and mother !
Eve. And first in sin.
Adam. And also the sole bearer of the Seed
Whereby sin dieth. Raise the majesties
Of thy disconsolate brows, O well-beloved,

And front with level eyelids the To come,
And all the dark o' the world! Rise, woman, rise
To thy peculiar and best altitudes
Of doing good and of enduring ill,
Of comforting for ill, and teaching good,
And reconciling all that ill and good
Unto the patience of a constant hope,—
Rise with thy daughters! If sin came by thee,
And by sin, death, the ransom-righteousness
The heavenly life and compensative rest,
Shall come by means of thee. If woe by thee
Had issue to the world, thou shalt go forth
An angel of the woe thou didst achieve,
Found acceptable to the world instead
Of others of that name, of whose bright steps
Thy deed stripped bare the hills. Be satisfied:
Something thou hast to bear through womanhood,
Peculiar suffering answering to the sin,—
Some pang paid down for each new human life,
Some weariness in guarding such a life,
Some coldness from the guarded, some mistrust
From those thou hast too well served, from those beloved
Too loyally some treason; feebleness
Within thy heart, and cruelty without,
And pressures of an alien tyranny
With its dynastic reasons of larger bones
And stronger sinews. But go to! thy love
Shall chant itself its own beatitudes
After its own life-working. A child's kiss
Set on thy sighing lips shall make thee glad;
A poor man served by thee shall make thee rich;
A sick man helped by thee shall make thee strong;
Thou shalt be served thyself by every sense
Of service which thou renderest.
Such a crown I set upon thy head,—Christ witnessing
With looks of prompting love,—to keep thee clear
Of all reproach against the sin forgone,
From all the generations which succeed.
Thy hand which plucked the apple
I clasp close;
Thy lips which spake wrong counsel
I kiss close;
I bless thee in the name of Paradise
And by the memory of Edenic joys
Forfeited and lost,—by that lastypress-tree,
Green at the gate, which thrilled as we came out;
And by the blessed nightingale which threw
Its melancholy music after us;
And by the flowers, whose spirits full
of smells
Did follow softly, plucking us behind
Back to the gradual banks, and vernal bowers,
And fourfold river-courses. By all
these
I bless thee to the contraries of these;
I bless thee to the desert and the thorns,
To the elemental change and turbulence,
And to the roar of the estranged beasts,
And to the solemn dignities of grief,
To each one of these ends, and to their end
Of death and the hereafter.
Eve. I accept
For me and for my daughters this high part,
Which lowly shall be counted. Noble work
Shall hold me in the place of garden rest,
And, in the place of Eden's lost delight,
Worthy endurance of permitted pain;
While on my longest patience there shall wait
Death's speechless angel, smiling in the east
Whence cometh the cold wind. I bow myself
Humbly henceforward on the ill I did,

That humbleness may keep it in the shade.
Shall it be so? Shall I smile, saying so?
O Seed! O King! O God, who *shall* be seed,—
What shall I say? As Eden's fountains swelled
Brightly betwixt their banks, so swells my soul
Betwixt thy love and power.

And, sweetest thoughts
Of foregone Eden, now, for the first time
Since God said "Adam," walking through the trees,
I dare to pluck you, as I plucked ere-while
The lily or pink, the rose or helio-trope.
So pluck I you—so largely—with both hands,
And throw you forward on the outer earth
Wherein we are cast out, to sweeten it.

Adam. As thou, Christ, to illumine it, holdest Heaven
Broadly over our heads

[*The Christ is gradually transfigured, during the following phrases of dialogue, into humanity and suffering.*

Eve. O Saviour Christ,
Thou standest mute in glory, like the sun!

Adam. We worship in thy silence, Saviour Christ.

Eve. Thy brows grow grander with a forecast woe;
Diviner, with the possible of death.
We worship in thy sorrow, Saviour Christ.

Adam. How do they clear still eyes transpierce our souls,
As gazing through them, toward the Father-throne

In a pathetical, full Deity,
Serenely as the stars gaze through the air

Straight on each other!

Eve. O pathetic Christ,
Thou standest mute in glory, like the moon!

CHRIST. Eternity stands alway fronting God;
A stern colossal image, with blind eyes,
And grand dim lips that murmur evermore,

God, God, God! while the rush of life and death,
The roar of act and thought, of evil and good,
The avalanches of the ruining worlds Tolling down space,—the new worlds' genesis
Budding in fire,—the gradual hum- ming growth Of the ancient atoms and first forms of earth,
The slow procession of the swathing seas And firmamental waters, and the noise Of the broad, fluent strata of pure airs,—
All these flow onward in the intervals Of that reiterated sound of—God!
Which WORD innumerous angels straightway lift

Wide on celestial altitudes of song And choral adoration, and then drop The burden softly, shutting the last notes

In silver wings. Howbeit, in the noon of time Eternity shall wax as dumb as death, While a new voice beneath the spheres shall cry, "God! Why hast thou forsaken me, my God?"
And not a voice in heaven shall answer it.

[*The transfiguration is complete in sadness.*

Adam. Thy speech is of the heavens, yet, O Christ,
Awfully human are thy voice and face!

Eve. My nature overcomes me from thine eyes.
CHRIST. In the set noon of time shall one from heaven, An angel fresh from looking upon God,

Descend before a woman, blessing her,

With perfect benediction of pure love, For all the world in all its elements, For all the creatures of earth, air, and sea,

For all men in the body and in the soul,

Unto all ends of glory and sanctity.

Eve. O pale pathetic Christ, I worship thee!

I thank thee for that woman!

CHRIST. Then at last,
I, wrapping round me your humanity,
Which, being sustained, shall neither
break nor burn
Beneath the fire of Godhead, will
tread earth,
And ransom you and it, and set
strong peace
Betwixt you and its creatures. With
my pangs
I will confront your sins; and, since
those sins
Have sunken to all Nature's heart
from yours,
The tears of my clean soul shall fol-
low them,
And set a holy passion to work clear
Absolute consecration. In my brow
Of kingly whiteness shall be crowned
anew
Your discrowned human nature.
Look on me!
As I shall be uplifted on a cross
In darkness of eclipse and anguish
dread,
So shall I lift up in my pierced
hands,—
Not into dark, but light; not unto
death,
But life,—beyond the reach of guilt
and grief,
The whole creation. Henceforth in
my name
Take courage, O thou woman,—man,
take hope!
Your grave shall be as smooth as
Eden's sward
Beneath the steps of your prospective
thoughts,
And, one step past it, a new Edengate
Shall open on a hinge of harmony,
And let you through to mercy. Ye
shall fall
No more within that Eden, nor pass
out
Any more from it. In which hope,
move on,
First sinners and first mourners.
Live and love,
Doing both nobly, because lowly;
Live and work, strongly, because pa-
tiently!
And, for the deed of death, trust it to
God
That it be well done, unrepented of,
And not to loss. And thence with
constant prayers

Fasten your souls so high, that con-
stantly

The smile of your heroic cheer may
float

Above all floods of earthly agonies,
Purification being the joy of pain!

[The vision of CHRIST vanishes. ADAM
and EVE stand in an ecstasy. The
earth-zodiac pales away shade by
shade, as the stars, star by star,
shine out in the sky; and the fol-
lowing chant from the two Earth-
spirits (as they sweep back into the
zodiac, and disappear with it) ac-
companies the process of change.

Earth-spirits.

By the mighty word thus spoken
Both for living and for dying,
We our homage oath, once broken,
Fasten back again in sighing,
And the creatures and the elements
renew their covenanting.

Here forgive us all our scorning;
Here we promise milder duty;
And the evening and the morning
Shall re-organize in beauty
A sabbath day of sabbath joy, for
universal chanting.

And if, still, this melancholy
May be strong to overcome us;
If this mortal and unholy
We still fail to cast out from us;
If we turn upon you unaware your
own dark influences;

If ye tremble when surrounded
By our forest pine and palm trees;
If we cannot cure the wounded
With our gun-trees and our balm-
trees;
And if your souls all mournfully sit
down among your senses,—

Yet, O mortals do not fear us!
We are gentle in our languor;
Much more good ye shall have near
us
Than any pain or anger,
And our God's refracted blessing in
our blessing shall be given.

By the desert's endless vigil
We will solemnize your passions;
By the wheel of the black eagle
We will teach you exaltations,
When he sails against the wind, to
the white spot up in heaven.

Ye shall find us tender nurses
 To your weariness of nature,
 And our hands shall stroke the
 curse's
 Dreary furrows from the creature,
 Till your bodies shall lie smooth in
 death, and straight and slum-
 berful.
 Then a couch we will provide you
 Where no summer heats shall
 dazzle,
 Strewing on you and beside you
 Thyme and rosemary and basil,
 And the yew-tree shall grow over-
 head to keep all safe and cool.
 Till the Holy Blood awaited
 Shall be chrism around us run-
 ning,
 Whereby, newly consecrated,
 We shall leap up in God's sun-
 ning,
 To join the spheric company which
 purer worlds assemble;
 While, renewed by new evangelists,
 Soul-consummated, made glori-
 ous,
 Ye shall brighten past the angels,
 Ye shall kneel to Christ victori-
 ons,
 And the rays around his feet beneath
 your sobbing lips shall trem-
 ble.
 [The phantastic vision has all passed;
 the earth-zodiac has broken like a
 bell, and is dissolved from the des-
 ert. The Earth-spirits vanish, and
 the stars shine out above.]

CHORUS OF INVISIBLE ANGELS,

*While Adam and Eve advance into the
 desert, hand in hand.*

Hear our heavenly promise
 Through your mortal passion !
 Love ye shall have from us,
 In a pure relation.
 As a fish or bird
 Swims or flies, if moving,
 We unseen are heard
 To live on by loving.
 Far above the glances
 Of your eager eyes,
 Listen ! we are loving.
 Listen, through man's ignorances,
 Listen, through God's mysteries,

Listen, down the heart of things,—
 Ye shall hear our mystic wings
 Murmurous with loving.
 Through the opal door
 Listen evermore
 How we live by loving !
First semichorus.
 When your bodies therefore
 Reach the grave, their goal,
 Softly will we care for
 Each enfranchised soul.
 Softly and unloathly,
 Through the door of opal,
 Toward the heavenly people,
 Fleeted on a minor fine
 Into the full chant divine,
 We will draw you smoothly,
 While the human in the minor
 Makes the harmony diviner.
 Listen to our loving !

Second semichorus.
 There, a sough of glory
 Shall breathe on you as you come,
 Ruffling round the doorway
 All the light of angeldom.
 From the empyrean centre
 Heavenly voices shall repeat,
 "Souls, redeemed and pardoned,
 enter,
 For the chrism on you is sweet."
 And every angel in the place
 Lowly shall bow his face,
 Folded fair on softened sounds,
 Because upon your hands and feet
 He images his Master's wounds.
 Listen to our loving !

First semichorus.
 So, in the universe's
 Consummated undoing,
 Our seraphs of white mercies
 Shall hover round the ruin.
 Their wings shall stream upon the
 flame
 As if incorporate of the same
 In elemental fusion ;
 And calm their faces shall burn out
 With a pale and mastering thought,
 And a steadfast looking of desire
 From out between the clefts of fire,
 While they cry, in the Holy's name,
 To the final Restitution.
 Listen to our loving !

Second semichorus.
 So, when the day of God is
 To the thick graves accompted,
 Awaking the dead bodies,
 The angel of the trumpet
 Shall split and shatter the earth
 To the roots of the grave

Which never before were slackened,
And quicken the charnel birth
With his blast so clear and brave
That the dead shall start, and
stand erect,
And every face of the burial-place
Shall the awful single look reflect
Wherewith he them awakened.
Listen to our loving !

First semichorus.
But wild is the horse of Death.
He will leap up wild at the clamor
Above and beneath.
And where is his Tamer
On that last day,
When he crieth, Ha, ha!
To the trumpet's blare,
And paweth the earth's Aceldama?
When he tosseth his head,
The drear-white steed,
And ghastly champeth the last
moon-ray,
What angel there
Can lead him away,
That the living may rule for the
dead?

Second semichorus.
Yet a TAMER shall be found !
One more bright than seraph
crowned,
And more strong than cherub bold,
Elder, too, than angel old,
By his gray eternities.
He shall master and surprise
The steed of Death.
For he is strong, and he is fain:
He shall quell him with a breath,
And shall lead him where he will,
With a whisper in the ear,
Full of fear,
And a hand upon the mane,
Grand and still.

First semichorus.
Through the flats of Hades, where the
souls assemble,
He will guide the Death-steed calm
between their ranks,
While, like beaten dogs, they a little
moan and tremble
To see the darkness curdle from the
horse's glittering flanks.
Through the flats of Hades, where the
dreary shade is,
Up the steep of heaven, will the Tamer
guide the steed,—
Up the spheric circles, circle above
circle,
We who count the ages shall count
the tolling tread;

Every hoof-fall striking a blinder,
blanker sparkle
From the stony orbs, which shall show
as they were dead.

Second semichorus.
All the way the Death-steed with tolling
hoofs shall travel;
Ashen gray the planets shall be motionless as stones;
Loosely shall the systems eject their
parts coeval;
Stagnant in the spaces shall float the
pallid moons;
Suns that touch their apogees, reeling
from their level,
Shall run back on their axles in wild,
low, broken tunes.

Chorus.
Up against the arches of the crystal
ceiling,
From the horse's nostrils, shall steam
the blunting breath;
Up between the angels pale with silent
feeling,
Will the Tamer calmly lead the horse
of Death.

Semi-chorus.
Cleaving all that silence, cleaving all
that glory,
Will the Tamer lead him straightway
to the Throne;
“Look out, O Jehovah, to this I bring
before thee,
With a hand mail-pierced,—I who am
thy Son.”
Then the Eye Divinest, from the
Deepest, flaming,
On the mystic courser shall look out
in fire:
Blind the beast shall stagger where it
overcame him,
Meek as lamb at pasture, bloodless in
desire.
Down the beast shall shiver, slain
amid the taming,
And by Life essential the phantasm
Death expire.

Chorus.
Listen, man, through life and death,
Through the dust and through the
breath;
Listen down the heart of things !
Ye shall hear our mystic wings
Murmurous with loving.
A Voice from below. Gabriel, thou
Gabriel !
A Voice from above. What wouldest
thou with me ?

First Voice. I heard thy voice sound
in the angels' song,
And I would give thee question.

Second Voice. Question me!

First Voice. Why have I called
thrice to my morning star,
And had no answer? All the stars
are out,

And answer in their places. Only in vain
I cast my voice against the outer rays
Of my star shut in light behind the sun.
No more reply than from a breaking
string,

Breaking when touched. Or is she
not my star?

Where is my star, my star? Have
ye cast down

Her glory like my glory? Has she
waxed

Mortal, like Adam? Has she learnt
to hate

Like any angel?

Second Voice. She is sad for thee.
All things grow sadder to thee, one
by one.

Angel Chorus.

Live, work on, O Earthy!

By the Actual's tension

Speed the arrow worthy

Of a pure ascension;

From the low earth round you

Reach the heights above you;

From the stripes that wound you

Seek the loves that love you.

God's divinest burneth plain

Through the crystal diaphane

Of our loves that love you.

First Voice. Gabriel, O Gabriel!

Second Voice. What wouldest thou
with me?

First Voice. Is it true, O thou Ga-
briel, that the crown

Of sorrow which I claimed, another
claims?

That HE claims THAT too?

Second Voice. Lost one, it is true.

First Voice. That HE will be an ex-
ile from his heaven

To lead those exiles homeward?

Second Voice. It is true.

First Voice. That HE will be an ex-
ile by his will,

As I by mine election?

Second Voice. It is true.

First Voice. That I shall stand sole
exile finally,—

Made desolate for fruition?

Second Voice. It is true.

First Voice. Gabriel!

Second Voice. I hearken.

First Voice. Is it true besides,
Aright true, that mine orient star
will give

Her name of "Bright and Morning
Star" to HIM,
And take the fairness of his virtue back
To cover loss and sadness?

Second Voice. It is true.

First Voice. Untrue, Untrue! O
Morning Star, O MINE,
Who sittest secret in a veil of light
Far up the starry spaces, say — *Untrue!*
Speak but so loud as doth a wasted
moon

To Tyrrhene waters. I am Lucifer.

[*A pause. Silence in the stars.*
All things grow sadder to me, one by
one.

Angel Chorus.

Exiled human creatures,
Let your hope grow larger,

Larger grows the vision
Of the new delight.

From this chain of Nature's

God is the Discharger,

And the Actual's prison

Opens to your sight.

Semichorus.

Calm the stars and golden

In a light exceeding:

What their rays have measured

Let your feet fulfil!

These are stars beholden

By your eyes in Eden;

Yet across the desert,

See them shining still!

Chorus.

Future joy and far light,

Working such relations,

Hear us singing gently,

Exiled is not lost!

God, above the starlight,

God, above the patience,

Shall at last present ye

Guerdons worth the cost.

Patiently enduring,

Painfully surrounded,

Listen how we love you,

Hope the uttermost!

Waiting for that curing

Which exalts the wounded,

Hear us sing above you —

EXILED, BUT NOT LOST!

[*The stars shine on brightly while ADAM
and EVE pursue their way into the
far wilderness. There is a sound
through the silence, as of the falling
tears of an angel.*

THE SERAPHIM.

"I look for Angels' songs, and hear Him cry."

GILES FLETCHER.

PART THE FIRST.

[*It is the time of the crucifixion; and the angels of heaven have departed towards the earth, except the two seraphim, Ador the Strong, and Zerah the Bright One.*
The place is the outer side of the shut heavenly gate.]

Ador. O SERAPH, pause no more!
Beside this gate of heaven we stand alone.

Zerah. Of heaven!

Ador. Our brother-hosts are gone—

Zerah. Are gone before.

Ador. And the golden harps the angels bore,

To help the songs of their desire,
Still burning from their hands of fire,

Lie, without touch or tone,
Upon the glass-sea shore.

Zerah. Silent upon the glass-sea shore!

Ador. There the Shadow from the throne,

Formless with infinity,
Hovers o'er the crystal sea.

Awfuler than light derived,
And red with those primeval heats

Whereby all life has lived.

Zerah. Our visible God, our heavenly seats!

Ador. Beneath us sinks the pomp angelical,

Cherub and seraph, powers and virtues, all,

The roar of whose descent has died

To astill sound, as thunder in torain.
Immeasurable space spreads,

magnified

With that thick life, along the plane

The worlds slid out on. What a fall

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And eddy of wings innumEROus,
crossed
By trailing curls that have not lost
The glitter of the God-smile shed
On every prostrate angel's head!
What gleaming-up of hands that fling
Their homage in retorted rays,
From high instinct of worshipping,

And habitude of praise!

Zerah. Rapidly they drop below us.
Pointed palm, and wing, and hair
Indistinguishable, show us
Only pulses in the air
Throbbing with a fiery beat,
As if a new creation heard
Some divine and plastic word,
And, trembling at its new-found being,

Awakened at our feet.

Ador. Zerah, do not wait for seeing I
His voice, his, that thrills us so
As we our harpstrings, uttered Go,
Behold the Holy in his woe!

And all are gone, save thee and —

Zerah. Thee!
Ador. I stood the nearest to the

throne,

In hierarchical degree,
What time the Voice said Go!
And whether I was moved alone

By the storm-pathos of the tone
Which swept through heaven the alien name of woe,
Or whether the subtle glory broke
Through my strong and shielding wings,

Bearing to my finite essence
Incapacious of their presence,
Infinite imaginings,
None knoweth save the Throned who spoke;

But I, who at creation stood upright,
 And heard the God-breath move
 Shaping the words that lightened,
 "Be there light,"
 Nor trembled but with love,
 Now fell down shudderingly,
 My face upon the pavement whence I
 had towered,
 As if in mine immortal overpowered
 By God's eternity.
Zerah. Let me wait! let me wait!
Ador. Nay, gaze not backward
 through the gate!
 God fills our heaven with God's own
 solitude
 Till all the pavements glow.
 His Godhead being no more subdued
 By itself, to glories low
 Which seraphs can sustain,
 What if thou, in gazing so,
 Shouldst behold but only one
 Attribute, the veil undone,—
 Even that to which we dare to press
 Nearest for its gentleness,—
 Ay, his love!
 How the deep ecstatic pain
 Thy being's strength would capture!
 Without language for the rapture,
 Without music strong to come
 And set the adoration free,
 For ever, ever, wouldest thou be
 Amid the general chorus dumb,
 God-stricken to seraphic agony.
 Or, brother, what if on thine eyes
 In vision bare should rise
 The life-fount whence his hand did
 gather
 With solitary force
 Our immortali ties!
 Straightway how thine own would
 wither,
 Falter like a human breath,
 And shrink into a point like death,
 By gazing on its source!—
 My words have imaged dread.
 Meekly hast thou bent thine head,
 And dropt thy wings in languish-
 ment
 Overclouding foot and face,
 As if God's throne were eminent
 Before thee in the place.
 Yet not—not so,
 O loving spirit and meek, dost thou
 fulfil
 The supreme Will.
 Not for obeisance, but obedience,
 Give motion to thy wings! Depart
 from hence!
 The Voice said, "Go!"

Zerah. Beloved, I depart.
 His will is as a spirit within my spirit,
 A portion of the being I inherit.
 His will is mine obedience. I resem-
 ble
 A flame all undefiled, though it trem-
 ble:
 I go and tremble. Love me, O beloved!
 O thou, who stronger art,
 And standest ever near the Infinite,
 Pale with the light of Light,
 Love me, beloved! — me, more newly
 made,
 More feeble, more afraid,
 And let me hear with mine thy pin-
 ions moved,
 As close and gentle as the loving are,
 That, love being near, heaven may
 not seem so far.
Ador. I am near thee, and I love thee.
 Were I loveless, from thee gone,
 Love is round, beneath, above
 thee,
 God, the omnipresent one.
 Spread the wing, and lift the brow!
 Well-beloved, what fearest thou?
Zerah. I fear, I fear —
Ador. What fear?
Zeruth. The fear of earth.
Ador. Of earth, the God-created,
 and God-praised
 In the hour of birth?
 Where every night the moon in light
 Doth lead the waters silver-faced?
 Where every day the sun doth lay
 A rapture to the heart of all
 The leafy and reeded pastoral,
 As if the joyous shout which burst
 From angel lips to see him first
 Had left a silent echo in his ray?
Zerah. Of earth, the God-created
 and God-curst,
 Where man is, and the thorn;
 Where sun and moon have borne
 No light to souls forlorn;
 Where Eden's tree of life no more
 upears
 Its spiral leaves and fruitage, but
 instead
 The yew-tree bows its melancholy
 head,
 And all the undergrasses kills and
 scars.
Ador. Of earth the weak,
 Made and unmade?
 Where men that faint do strive for
 crowns that fade?
 Where, having won the profit which
 they seek,

They lie beside the sceptre and the gold
With fleshless hands that cannot wield or hold,
And the stars shine in their unwinking eyes?

Zerah. Of earth the bold,
Where the blind matter wrings
An awful potency out of impotence,
Bowing the spiritual things.

To the things of sense;
Where the human will replies
With ay and no,
Because the human pulse is quick or slow;
Where Love succumbs to Change,
With only his own memories, for revenge.

And the fearful mystery—

Ador. Called Death?
Zerah. Nay, death is fearful; but who saith
“To die,” is comprehensible.
What’s fearfuller, thou knowest well,
Though the utterance be not for thee,
Lest it blanch thy lips from glory—
Ay! the cursed thing that moved
A shadow of ill, long time ago,
Across our heaven’s own shining floor,
And when it vanished some who were
On thrones of holy empire there,
Did reign — were seen — were — never more.

Come nearer, O beloved!
Ador. I am near thee. Didst thou bear thee

Ever to this earth?
Zerah. Before.
When thrilling from his hand along
Its lustrous path with spheric song
The earth was deathless, sorrowless.
Unfearing, then, pure feet might press
The grasses brightening with their feet,
For God’s own voice did mix its sound

In a solemn confluence oft
With the rivers’ flowing round,
And the life-tree’s waving soft.
Beautiful new earth and strange!

Ador. Ifast thou seen it since — the change?

Zerah. Nay; or wherefore should I fear

To look upon it now?
I have beheld the ruined things

Only in depicturings
Of angels from an earthly mission.
Strong one, even upon thy brow,
When, with task completed, given
Back to us in that transition,
I have beheld thee silent stand,
Abstracted in the seraph band,
Without a smile in heaven.

Ador. Then thou wast not one of those

Whom the loving Father chose
In visionary pomp to sweep
O’er Judaea’s grassy places,
O’er the shepherds and the sheep,
Though thou art so tender, dimming

All the stars except one star
With their brighter, kinder faces?
And using heaven’s own tune in hymning,
While deep response from earth’s own mountains ran,
“Peace upon earth, good-will to man.”

Zerah. “Glory to God.” I said amen afar.
And those who from that earthly mission are,

Within mine ears have told
That the seven everlasting Spirits did hold
With such a sweet and prodigal constraint
The meaning yet the mystery of the song
What time they sang it, on their natures strong,

That, gazing down on earth’s dark steadfastness,
And speaking the new peace in promises,
The love and pity made their voices faint
Into the low and tender music, keeping

The place in heaven of what on earth is weeping.

Ador. Peace upon earth. Come down to it.

Zerah. Ah me! I hear thereof uncomprehendingly.
Peace where the tempest, where the sighing is,

And worship of the idol, ‘stead of His?

Ador. Yea, peace, where He is.

Zerah. Hel Say it again.

Ador. Where He is.

Zerah. Can it be
That earth retains a tree
Whose leaves like Eden foliage can
be swayed
By the breathing of His voice, nor
shrink and fade?
Ador. There is a tree! — it hath no
leaf nor root;
Upon it hangs a curse for all its fruit:
Its shadow on His head is laid.
For He, the crowned Son,
Has left his crown and throne,
Walks earth in Adam's clay,
Eve's snake to bruise and slay —
Zerah. Walks earth in clay?
Ador. And, walking in the clay
which he created,
He through it shall touch death.
What do I utter? what conceive? did
breath
Of demon howl it in a blasphemy?
Or was it mine own voice, informed,
dilated
By the seven confluent Spirits — Speak
— answer me!
Who said man's victim was his deity?
Zerah. Beloved, beloved; the word
came forth from thee.
Thine eyes are rolling a tempestuous
light
Above, below, around,
As putting thunder questions without
cloud,
Reverberate without sound,
To universal nature's depth and
height.
The tremor of an inexpressive thought
Too self-amazed to shape itself aloud
O'erruns the awful curving of thy lips;
And while thine hands are stretched
above,
As newly they had caught
Some lightning from the throne, or
showed the Lord
Some retributive sword,
Thy brows do alternate with wild
eclipse
And radiance, with contrasted wrath
and love,
As God had called thee to a
seraph's part,
With a man's quailing heart.
Ador. O heart, O heart of man!
O ta'en from human clay
To be no seraph's, but Jehovah's
own!
Made holy in the taking,
And yet unseparate
From death's perpetual ban,

And human feelings sad and passion-
ate;
Still subject to the treacherous for-
saking
Of other hearts, and its own steadfast
pain.
O heart of man — of God! which God
has ta'en
From out the dust, with its humanity
Mournful and weak, yet innocent,
around it,
And bade its many pulses beating
lie
Beside that incomminable stir
Of Deity wherewith he interwound it.
O man! and is thy nature so defiled
That all that holy heart's devout law-
keeping,
And low pathetic beat in deserts wild,
And gushings pitiful of tender weep-
ing
For traitors who consigned it to such
woe,—
That all could cleanse thee not, with-
out the flow
Of blood, the life-blood — *His* — and
streaming so?
O earth the thundereleft, windshaken,
where
The louder voice of "blood and
blood" doth rise,
Hast thou an altar for this sacrifice?
O heaven! O vacant throne!
O crowned hierarchies that wear your
crown
When his is put away!
Are ye unshamed that ye cannot dim
Your alien brightness to be liker him,
Assume a human passion, and down-
lay
Your sweet securityness for congenial
fears,
And teach your cloudless ever-burn-
ing eyes
The mystery of his tears?
Zerah. I am strong, I am strong,
Were I never to see my heaven again,
I would wheel to earth like the tem-
pest rain
Which sweeps there with an exultant
sound
To lose its life as it reaches the
ground.
I am strong, I am strong.
Away from mine inward v'sion swim
The shining seats of my heavenly
birth,
I see but his, I see but him —
The Maker's steps on his cruel earth.

Will the bitter herbs of earth grow sweet
 To me, as trodden by his feet ?
 Will the vexed accurst humanity,
 As worn by him, begin to be
 A blessed, yea, a sacred thing,
 For love and awe and ministering ?
 I am strong, I am strong.
 By our angel ken shall we survey
 His loving smile through his woful clay ?
 I am swift, I am strong,
 The love is bearing me along.
Ador. One love is bearing us along.

PART THE SECOND.

[*Mid-air, above Judæa. Ador and Zerah are a little apart from the visible angelic hosts.*]

Ador. BELOVED, dost thou see ?
Zerah. Thee — thee.
 Thy burning eyes already are
 Grown wild and mournful as a star
 Whose occupation is for aye
 To look upon the place of clay.
 Whereon thou lookest now.
 Thy crown is fainting on thy brow
 To the likeness of a cloud,
 The forehead's self a little bowed
 From its aspect high and holy,
 As it would in meekness meet
 Some seraphic melancholy:
 Thy very wings that lately flung
 An outline clear do flicker here
 And wear to each a shadow hung,
 Dropped across thy feet.
 In these strange contrasting glooms
 Stagnant with the scent of tombs,
 Seraph faces, O my brother,
 Show awfully to one another.
Ador. Dost thou see ?
Zerah, Even so; I see
 Our empyreal company,
 Alone the memory of their brightness
 Left in them, as in thee.
 The circle upon circle, tier on tier,
 Piling earth's hemisphere
 With heavenly infiniteness,
 Above us and around,
 Straining the whole horizon like a bow:

Their songful lips divorced from all sound,
 A darkness gliding down their silvery glances,
 Bowing their steadfast solemn countenances
 As if they heard God speak, and could not glow.
Ador. Look downward ! dost thou see ?
Zerah. And wouldst thou press that vision on my words ?
 Doth not earth speak enough
 Of change and of undoing,
 Without a seraph's witness ? Oceans rough
 With tempest, pastoral swards
 Displaced by fiery deserts, mountains rising,
 The bolt fallen yesterday,
 That shake their piny heads, as who would say
 "We are too beautiful for our decay" —
 Shall seraphs speak of these things ?
 Let alone
 Earth to her earthly moan !
Voice of all things. Is there no moan but hers ?
Ador. Hearest thou the attestation
 Of the roused universe
 Like a desert lion shaking
 Dews of silence from its mane ?
 With an irrepressive passion
 Uprising at once,
 Rising up and forsaking
 Its solemn state in the circle of suns,
 To attest the pain
 Of him who stands (O patience sweet !)
 In his own handprints of creation,
 With human feet ?
Voice of all things. Is there no moan but ours ?
Zerah. Forms, Spaces, Motions wide,
 O meek, insensate things,
 O congregated matters ! who inherit
 Instead of vital powers,
 Impulsions God-supplied ;
 Instead of influent spirit,
 A clear informing beauty ;
 Instead of creature-duty
 Submission calm as rest,
 Lights, without feet or wings,
 In golden courses sliding !
 Gloom, stagnantly subsiding,
 Whose lustrous heart away was prest
 Into the argent stars !

Ye crystal, firmamental bars
That hold the skyey waters free
From tide or tempest's ecstasy !
Airs universal ! thunders lorn
That wait your lightnings in cloud-cave

Hewn out by the winds ! O brave
And subtle elements ! the Holy
Hath charged me by your voice
with folly.¹

Enough, the mystic arrow leaves its
wound.

Return ye to your silences inborn,
Or to your inarticulated sound.

Ador. Zerah!

Zerah. Wilt thou rebuke ?

God hath rebuked me, brother. I am
weak.

Ador. Zerah, my brother Zerah !
could I speak

Of thee, 'twould be of love to thee.

Zerah Thy look
Is fixed on earth, as mine upon thy
face.

Where shall I seek His ?

I have thrown
One look upon earth, but one,
Over the blue mountain lines,
Over the forests of palms and pines,
Over the harvest-lands golden,
Over the valleys that fold in
The gardens and vines —

He is not there.

All these are unworthy
Those footsteps to bear,
Before which, bowing down
I would fain quench the stars of my
crown

In the dark of the earthy.

Where shall I seek him ?

No reply ?

Hath language left thy lips, to place
Its vocal in thine eye ?
Ador. Ador ! are we come
To a double portent, that
Dumb matter grows articulate,
And songful seraphs dumb ?

Ador. Ador !

Ador. I constrain
The passion of my silence. None
Of those places gazed upon
Are gloomy enow to fit his pain.
Unto Him whose forming word
Gave to nature flower and sward,
She hath given back again

For the myrtle, the thorn,
For the sylvan calm, the human scorn.
¹ "His angels he charged with folly." —
Job iv. 18.

Still, still, reluctant seraph, gaze beneath !

There is a city —

Zerah. Temple and tower,
Palace and purple, would droop like a
flower,

(Or a cloud at our breath)

If He neared in his state
The outermost gate.

Ador. Ah me, not so
In the state of a king did the victim
go !

And Thou who hangest mute of
speech

'Twixt heaven and earth, with fore-head yet
Stained by the bloody sweat,

God ! man ! thou hast forgone thy
throne in each.

Zerah. Thine eyes behold him !

Ador. Yea, below.
Track the gazing of mine eyes,
Naming God within thine heart

That its weakness may depart,

And the vision rise !

Seest thou yet, beloved ?

Zerah. I see
Beyond the city, crosses three,
And mortals three that hang there-on

'Ghast and silent to the sun.
Round them blacken and welter
and press

Staring multitudes whose father
Adam was, whose brows are dark
With his Cain's corroded mark,
Who curse with looks. Nay — let
me rather

Turn unto the wilderness !

Ador. Turn not ! God dwells with
men.

Zerah. Above
He dwells with angels, and they love.
Can these love ? With the living's
pride

They stare at those who die, who
hang

In their sight and die. They bear
the streak

Of the crosses' shadow, black not
wide,

To fall on their heads, as it swerves
aside

When the victims' pang

Makes the dry wood creak.

Ador. The cross — the cross !

Zerah. A woman kneels
The mid cross under,
With white lips asunder,

And motion on each.
They throb as she feels,
With a spasm, not a speech;
And her lids, close as sleep,
Are less calm, for the eyes
Have made room there to weep
Drop on drop —

Ador. Weep? Weep blood,
All women, all men !
He sweated it, He,
For your pale womanhood
And base manhood. Agreeo
That these water-tears, then,
Are vain, mocking like laugh-
ter.

Weep blood ! Shall the flood
Of salt curses, whose foam is the
darkness, on roll
Forward, on from the strand of the
storm-beaten years,
And back from the rocks of the hor-
rid hereafter,
And up in a coil from the present's
wrath-spring,
Yea, down from the windows of
heaven opening,
Deep calling to deep as they meet on
His soul —

And men weep only tears ?

Zerah. Little drops in the lapses !
And yet, Ador, perhaps
It is all that they can.
Tears ! the lovingest man
Has no better bestowed
Upon man.

Ador. Nor on God.

Zerah. Do all-givers need gifts ?
If the Giver said "Give," the first
motion would slay

Our Immortals, the echo would ruin
away

The same worlds which he made.
Why, what angel uplifts
Such a music, so clear,
It may seem in God's ear

Worth more than a woman's hoarse
weeping ? And thus,
Pity tender as tears I above thee
would speak,

Thou woman that weepest ! weep un-
scorned of us !

I, the tearless and pure, am but loving
and weak.

Ador. Speak low, my brother, low,
— and not of love

Or human or angelic ! Rather stand
Before the throne of that Supreme
above,
In whose infinitude the secracies

Of thine own being lie hid, and lift
thine hand

Exultant, saying, "Lord God, I am
wise ! "

Than utter here, "I love."

Zerah. And yet thine eyes
Do utter it. They melt in tender
light, —

The tears of heaven.

Ador. Of heaven. Ah, me !

Zerah. Ador !

Ador. Say on !

Zerah. The crucified are three.
Beloved, they are unlike.

Ador. Unlike.

Zerah. For one
Is as a man who has sinned, and
still

Doth wear the wicked will,
The hard, malign life-energy,
Tossed outward, in the parting soul's
disdain,

On brow and lip that cannot change
again.

Ador. And one —

Zerah. Has also sinned.
And yet (O marvel !) doth the Spirit-
wind

Blow white those waters ? Death
upon his face

Is rather shine than shade, —

A tender shine by looks beloved
made:

He seemeth dying in a quiet place,
And less by iron wounds in hands
and feet

Than heart-broke by new joy too sud-
den and sweet.

Ador. And one ! —

Zerah. And ONE ! —

Ador. Why dost thou pause ?

Zerah. God ! God !

Spirit of my spirit ! who movest
Through seraph veins in burning
deity

To light the quenchless pulses ! —

Ador. But hast trod
The depths of love in thy peculiar
nature,

And not in any thou hast made and
lovest

In narrow seraph hearts ! —

Zerah. Above, Creator !

Within, Upholder !

Ador. And below, below,
The creature's and the upholden's
sacrifice !

Zerah. Why do I pause ?

Ador. There is a silentness

That answers thee enow,
That, like a brazen sound
Excluding others, doth ensheathe us
round:
Hear it. It is not from the visible
skies,
Though they are still,
Unconscious that their own dropped
dews express
The light of heaven on every earthly
hill.
It is not from the hills, though calm
and bare
They, since their first creation,
Through midnight cloud or morning's
glittering air,
Or the deep deluge blindness, toward
the place
Whence thrilled the mystic word's
creative grace,
And whence again shall come
The word that uncreates,
Have lift their brows in voiceless ex-
pectation.
It is not from the places that en-
tomb
Man's dead, though common Silence
there dilates
Her soul to grand proportions, wor-
thily
To fill life's vacant room.
Not there — not there.
Not yet within those chambers lieth
He,
A dead one in his living world; his
south
And west winds blowing over earth
and sea,
And not a breath on that creating
mouth.
But now a silence keeps
(Not death's, nor sleep's)
The lips whose whispered word
Might roll the thunders round rever-
berated.
Silent art thou, O my Lord,
Bowing down thy stricken head!
Fearest thou a groan of thine
Would make the pulse of thy crea-
tion fail
As thine own pulse? — would rend
the veil
Of visible things, and let the flood
Of the unseen Light, the essential
God,
Rush in towhelm the undivine?
Thy silence, to my thinking, is as
dread.
Zerah. O silence!

Ador. Doth it say to thee
— the NAME,
Slow-learning seraph?
Zerah. I have learnt.
Ador. The flame
Perishes in thine eyes.
Zerah. He opened his,
And looked. I cannot bear —
Ador. Their agony?
Zerah. Their love. God's depth is
in them. From his brows
White, terrible in meekness, didst
thou see
The lifted eyes unclose?
He is God, seraph! Look no more on
me,
O God — I am not God.
Ador. The loving is
Sublimed within them by the sorrow-
ful.
In heaven we could sustain them.
Zerah. Heaven is dull,
Mine Ador, to man's earth. The
light that burns
In fluent, reffuent motion
Along the crystal ocean;
The springing of the golden harps be-
tween
The bowery wings, in fountains of
sweet sound;
The winding, wandering music that
returns
Upon itself, exultingly self-bound
In the great spheric round
Of everlasting praises;
The God-thoughts in our midst that
intervene,
Visibly flashing from the supreme
throne
Full in seraphic faces
Till each astonishes the other, grown
More beautiful with worship and de-
light —
My heaven! my home of heaven! my
infinite
Heaven choirs! what are ye to this
dust and death,
This cloud, this cold, these tears, this
failing breath,
Where God's immortal love now is-
suethe
In this MAN's woe?
Ador. His eyes are very deep, yet
calm.
Zerah. No more
On me, Jehovah-man —
Ador. Calm-deep. They show
A passion which is tranquil. They
are seeing

No earth, no heaven, no men that
slay and curse,
No seraphs that adore;
Their gaze is on the invisible, the
dread,
The things we cannot view or think
or speak,
Because we are too happy, or too
weak,—
The sea of ill for which the universe
With all its piled space, can find no
shore,
With all its life no living foot to
tread.
But he, accomplished in Jehovah-
being,
Sustains the gaze adown,
Conceives the vast despair,
And feels the billowy griefs come up
to drown,
Nor fears, nor faints, nor fails, till all
be finished.
Zerah. Thus, do I find Thee thus?
My undiminished
And undiminishing God! — my God!
The echoes are still tremulous along
The heavenly mountains, of the latest
song
Thy manifested glory swept abroad
In rushing past our lips: they echo
aye
“Creator, thou art strong!
Creator, thou art blessed over all.”
By what new utterance shall I now
recall,
Unteaching the heaven-echoes? dare
I say,
“Creator, thou art feebler than thy
work!
Creator, thou art sadder than thy
creature!
A worm, and not a man,
Yea, no worm, but a curse”? ?
I dare not so mine heavenly phrase
reverse.
Albeit the piercing thorn and thistle-
fork
(Whose seed disordered ran
From Eve’s hand trembling when the
curse did reach her)
Be garnered darklier in thy soul, the
rod
That smites thee never blossoming,
and thou
Grief-bearer for thy world, with un-
kinged brow—
I leave to men their song of Ichabod:
I have an angel-tongue—I know but
praise.

Ador. Hereafter shall the blood-
bought captives raise
The passion-song of blood.
Zerah. And we, extend
Our holy vacant hands towards the
throne,
Crying, “We have no music.”
Ador. Rather, blend
Both musics into one.
The sanctities and sanctified above
Shall each to each, with lifted looks
serene,
Their shining faces lean,
And mix the adoring breath,
And breathe the full thanksgiving.
Zerah. But the love—
The love, mine Ador!
Ador. Do we love not?
Zerah. Yea,
But not as man shall! not with life
for death,
New-throbbing through the startled
being; not
With strange astonished smiles, that
ever may
Gush passionate, like tears, and fill
their place;
Nor yet with speechless memories of
what
Earth’s winters were, enverduring the
green
Of every heavenly palm
Whose windless, shadeless calm
Moves only at the breath of the Un-
seen.
Oh, not with this blood on us, and
this face,
Still, haply, pale with sorrow that it
bore
In our behalf, and tender evermore,
With nature all our own, upon us
gazing,
Nor yet with these forgiving hands
upraising
Their unreproachful wounds, alone to
bless!
Alas, Creator! shall we love thee less
Than mortals shall?
Ador. Amen! so let it be.
We love in our proportion to the
bound
Thine infinite our finite set around,
And that is finitely, thou infinite,
And worthy infinite love! And our
delight
Is watching the dear love poured out
to thee
From ever fuller chalice. Blessed
they,

Who love thee more than we do :
blessed we,
Viewing that love which shall exceed
even this,
And winning in the sight a double
bliss
For all so lost in love's supremacy.
The bliss is better. Only on the sad
Cold earth there are who say
It seemeth better to be great than
glad.

The bliss is better. Love him more,
O man,
Than sinless seraphs can !
Zerath. Yea, love him more !
Voice of the angelic multitude. Yea,
more !

Ador. The loving word
Is caught by those from whom we
stand apart;
For silence hath no deepness in her
heart
Where love's low name low breathed
would not be heard
By angels, clear as thunder.

Angelic Voices. Love him more,
Ador. Sweet voices, swooning o'er
The music which ye make !
Albeit to love there were not ever
given
A mournful sound when uttered out
of heaven,
That angel-sadness ye would fitly
take.
Of love be silent now ! We gaze
down
Upon the incarnate Love who wears
no crown.

Zerath. No crown ! the woe instead
Is heavy on his head,
Pressing inward on his brain
With a hot and clinging pain
Till all tears are prest away,
And clear and calm his vision may
Peruse the black abyss.
No rod, no sceptre, is
Holden in his fingers pale:
They close instead upon the nail,
Concealing the sharp dole,
Never stirring to put by
The fair hair peaked with blood,
Drooping forward from the rood
Helplessly, heavily,
On the cheek that waxeth colder,
Whiter ever, and the shoulder
Where the government was laid.
His glory made the heavens afraid:
Will he not unearth this cross from
its hole ?

His pity makes his piteous state;
Will he be uncompassionate
Alone to his proper soul ?
Yea, will he not lift up
His lips from the bitter cup,
His brows from the dreary weight,
His hand from the clinching cross,
Crying, " My Father, give to me
Again the joy I had with thee
Or ere this earth was made for
loss ? "

No stir — no sound.
The love and woe being interwound,
He cleaveth to the woe,
And putteth forth heaven's strength
below —

To bear.

Ador. And that creates his anguish
now,

Which made his glory there.

Zerath. Shall it need be so ?
Awake, thou Earth ! behold, —
Thou, uttered forth of old
In all thy life-emotion,
In all thy vernal noises;
In the rollings of thine ocean,
Leaping founts, and rivers run-
ning,
In thy woods' prophetic heaving
Ere the rains a stroke have
given;

In thy winds' exultant voices
When they feel the hills anear;
In the firmamental sunning,
And the tempest which rejoices
Thy full heart with an awful cheer !
Thou, uttered forth of old,
And with all thy music rolled

In a breath abroad
By the breathing God !
Awake ! He is here ! behold !
Even thou —
Beseems it good

To thy vacant vision dim,
That the deadly ruin should
For thy sake encompass him ?
That the Master-word should lie
A mere silence, while his own

Processive harmony,
The faintest echo of his lightest tone,
Is sweeping in a choral triumph by ?
Awake ! emit a cry !
And say, albeit used
From Adam's ancient years
To falls of acrid tears,
To frequent sighs unloosed,
Caught back to press again
On bosoms zoned with pain, —
To corsies still and sullen

The shine and music dulling
With closed eyes and ears
That nothing sweet can enter,
Commove thy no less
With that forced quietness
Than the earthquake in thy cen-
tre —
Thou hast not learnt to bear
This new divine despair !
These tears that sink into thee,
These dying eyes that view thee,
This dropping blood from lifted
rood,
They darken and undo thee.
Thou canst not presently sustain
this curse —
Cry, cry, thou hast not force !
Cry, thou wouldest fainer keep.
Thy hopeless charnels deep,
Thyself a general tomb
Where the first and the second
Death
Sit gazing face to face,
And mar each other's breath,
While silent bones through all the
place
'Neath sun and moon do faintly
glisten,
And seem to lie and listen
For the tramp of the coming Doom.
Is it not meet
That they who erst the Eden fruit
did eat
Should champ the ashes ?
That they who wrap them in the
thunder-cloud
Should wear it as a shroud,
Perishing by its flashes ?
That they who vexed the lion should
be rent ?
Cry, cry, "I will sustain my pun-
ishment,
The sin being mine, but take away
from me
This visioned dread — this Man —
this Deity !"
The Earth. I have groaned; I have
travailed: I am weary.
I am blind with my own grief, and
cannot see,
As clear-eyed angels can, his agony;
And what I see I also can sustain,
Because his power protects me from
his pain.
I have groaned; I have travailed: I
am dreary,
Harkening the thick sobs of my
children's heart:
How can I say "Depart"

To that Atoner making calm and free?
Am I a God as he,
To lay down peace and power as will-
ingly ?
Ador. He looked for some to pity:
there is none.
All pity is within him, and not for
him.
His earth is iron under him, and o'er
him
His skies are brass.
His seraphs cry, "Alas!"
With hallelujah voice that cannot
weep.
And man, for whom the dreadful
work is done . . .
Scornful Voices from the Earth. If
verily this be the Eternal's
son —
Ador. Thou hearest. Man is grate-
ful.
Zerah. Can I hear,
Nor darken into man, and cease for-
ever
My seraph smile to wear ?
Was it for such
It pleased him to overleap
His glory with his love, and sever
From the God-light and the
throne,
And all angels bowing down,
From whom his every look did
touch
New notes of joy on the unworn
string
Of an eternal worshipping ?
For such he left his heaven ?
There, though never bought by
blood
And tears, we gave him gratitude:
We loved him there, though un-
forgiven.
Ador. The light is riven
Above, around,
And down in lurid fragments flung,
That catch the mountain-peak and
stream
With momentary gleam,
Then perish in the water and the
ground.
River and waterfall,
Forest and wilderness,
Mountain and city, are together
wrung
Into one shape, and that is shapeless-
ness:
The darkness stands for all.
Zerah. The pathos hath the day un-
done:

The death-look of his eyes
Hath overcome the sun,
And made it sicken in its narrow
skies.

Ador. Is it to death ? He dieth.

Zerah. Through the dark
He still, he only, is discernible.
The naked hands and feet transfixed
stark,
The countenance of patient anguish
white,

Do make themselves a light
More dreadful than the glooms which
round them dwell,
And therein do they shine.

Ador. God ! Father-God !
Perpetual Radiance on the radiant
throne !

Uplift the lids of inward deity,
Flashing abroad
Thy burning Infinite !
Light up this dark where there is
nought to see
Except the unimagined agony
Upon the sinless forehead of the Son !

Zerah. God, tarry not ! Behold,
now

Hath he wandered as a stranger,
Sorrowed as a victim. Thou

Appear for him, O Father !

Appear for him, Avenger !

Appear for him, Just One and Holy
One,

For he is holy and just !

At once the darkness and dishonor
rather
To the ragged jaws of hungry chaos
rake,

And hurl aback to ancient dust
These mortals that make blasphemies

With their made breath, this earth
and skies

That only grow a little dim,
Seeing their curse on him.
But him, of all forsaken,
Of creature and of brother,
Never wilt thou forsake !

Thy living and thy loving cannot
slacken

Their firm essential hold upon each
other,
And well thou dost remember how
his part

Was still to lie upon thy breast, and
be

Partaker of the light that dwelt in
thee

Ere sun or seraph shone;

And how, while silence trembled
round the throne,
Thou countedst by the beatings of
his heart

The moments of thine own eternity.
Awaken,

O right hand with the lightnings !
Again gather
His glory to thy glory ! What es-
tranger,

What ill supreme in evil, can be thrust
Between the faithful Father and the
Son ?

Appear for him, O Father !

Appear for him, Avenger !

Appear for him, Just One and Holy
One,

For he is holy and just !

Ador. Thy face upturned toward
the throne is dark;

Thou hast no answer, Zerah.
Zerah. No reply,

O uns forsaking Father ?
Ador. Hark !

Instead of downward voice, a cry
Is uttered from beneath.

Zerah. And by a sharper sound
than death

Mine immortality is riven.
The heavy darkness which doth tent
the sky

Floats backward as by a sudden wind;
But I see no light behind;

But I feel the farthest stars are all
Stricken and shaken,

And I know a shadow sad and broad
Doth fall — doth fall

On our vacant thrones in heaven.

Voice from the Cross. My GOD, MY
GOD,

WHY HAST THOU ME FORSAKEN ?

The Earth. Ah me, ah me, ah me !
the dreadful why !

My sin is on thee, sinless one ! Thou
art

God-orphaned for my burden on thy
head.

Dark sin, white innocence, endurance
dread !

Be still within your shrouds, my
buried dead,

Nor work with this quick horror
round mine heart.

Zerah. He hath forsaken Him. I
perish.

Ador. Hold
Upon his name ! we perish not. Of
old

His will —

Zerah. I seek his will. Seek, seraphim !
 My God, my God ! where is it ?
 Doth that curse
 Reverberate spare us, seraph or universe ?
He hath forsaken *Him*.
Ador. He cannot fail.
Angel Voices. We faint, we droop ;
 Our love doth tremble like fear.
Voice of Fallen Angels from the Earth. Do we prevail ?
 Or are we lost ? Hath not the ill we did
 Been heretofore our good ?
 Is it not ill that One, all sinless,
 should
 Hang heavy with all curses on a cross ?
 Nathless, that cry ! With huddled faces hid
 Within the empty graves which men did scoop
 To hold more damned dead, we shudder through
 What shall exalt us, or undo, —
 Our triumph, or our loss.
Voice from the Cross. It is FINISHED.
Zerah. Hark, again !
 Like a victor speaks the slain.
Angel Voices. Finished be the trembling vain !
Ador. Upward, like a well-loved son,
 Looketh *He*, the orphaned One.
Angel Voices. Finished is the mystic pain.
Voice of Fallen Angels. His deathly forehead at the word
 Gleameth like a seraph sword.
Angel Voices. Finished is the demon reign.
Ador. His breath, as living God, createth ;
 His breath, as dying man, completeth.
Angel Voices. Finished work his hands sustain.
The Earth. In mine ancient sepulchres,
 Where my kings and prophets freeze,
 Adam dead four thousand years,
 Unwakened by the universe's
 Everlasting moan,
 Aye his ghastly silence mocking —
 Unwakened by his children's knocking.
 At his old sepulchral stone,
 "Adam, Adam, all this curse is Thine and on us yet ! " —

Unwakened by the ceaseless tears
 Wherewith they made his cerement wet,
 "Adam, must thy curse remain ? " —
 Starts with sudden life and hears,
 Through the slow dripping of the cavermed eaves, —
Angel Voices. Finished is his bane.
Voice from the Cross. FATHER ! MY SPIRIT TO THINE HANDS IS GIVEN.
Ador. Hear the wailing winds that be
 By wings of unclean spirits made !
 They in that last look surveyed
 The love they lost in losing heaven,
 And passionately flee
 With a desolate cry that cleaves
 The natural storms, though they are lifting
 God's strong cedar-roots like leaves,
 And the earthquake and the thunder,
 Neither keeping either under,
 Roar and hurtle through the glooms,
 And a few pale stars are drifting
 Past the dark to disappear,
 What time, from the splitting tombs
 Gleamingly the dead arise,
 Viewing with their death-calmed eyes
 The elemental strategies,
 To witness, victory is the Lord's.
Hear the wail o' the spirits ! hear !
Zerah. I hear alone the memory of his words.

EPILOGUE.

I.

My song is done.
 My voice that long hath faltered shall be still.
 The mystic darkness drops from Calvary's hill
 Into the common light of this day's sun.

II.

I see no more thy cross, O holy Slain !
 I hear no more the horror and the coil
 Of the great world's turmoil
 Feeling thy countenance *too stilly*, — nor yell

Of demons sweeping past it to their prison.
The skies that turned to darkness with thy pain
 Make now a summer's day;
And on my changed ear that sabbath bell
 Records how CHRIST IS RISEN.

III.

And I — ah, what am I
To counterfeit, with faculty earth-darkened,
 Seraphic brows of light,
And seraph language never used nor harkened?
Ah me! what word that seraphs say,
 could come
From mouth so used to sighs, so soon to lie
 Sighless, because then breathless, in the tomb?

IV.

Bright ministers of God and grace,
 of grace
Because of God! — whether ye bow adown
In your own heaven, before the living face
Of Him who died, and deathless wears the crown,
Or whether at this hour ye haply are

Anear, around me, hiding in the night
Of this permitted ignorance your light,
 This feebleness to spare, —
Forgive me, that mine earthly heart should dare
Shape images of unincarnate spirits,
And lay upon their burning lips a thought
Cold with the weeping which mine earth inherits.
And though ye find in such hoarse music, wrought
To copy yours, a cadence all the while
Of sin and sorrow, only pitying smile!
 Ye know to pity, well.

V.

I, too, may haply smile another day
At the fair recollection of this lay,
When God may call me in your midst
 to dwell,
To hear your most sweet music's miracle,
And see your wondrous faces. May it be!
For his remembered sake, the Slain on rood,
Who rolled his earthly garment red in blood
(Treading the wine-press) that the weak, like me,
Before his heavenly throne should walk in white.

PROMETHEUS BOUND.

FROM THE GREEK OF ESCHYLUS.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

PROMETHEUS. HEPHESTUS.
OCEANUS. Io, daughter of Inachus.
HERMES. chus.
STRENGTH and FORCE.
CHORUS of Ocean Nymphs.
SCENE. — STRENGTH and FORCE, HEPHESTUS and PROMETHEUS, at the Rocks.
Strength. We reach the utmost limit of the earth, —
The Scythian track, the desert without man.

And now, Hephestus, thou must needs fulfil
The mandate of our Father, and with links
Indissoluble of adamantine chains
Fasten against this beetling precipice
This guilty god. Because he flitched away
Thine own bright flower, the glory of plastic fire,
And gifted mortals with it, — such a sin
It doth Lechoove he expiate to the gods,

Learning to accept the empery of Zeus,
And leave off his old trick of loving
man.

Hephaestus. O Strength and Force,
for you our Zeus's will
Presents a deed for doing, no more ! —
But I,

I lack your daring, up this storm-rent
chasm

To fix with violent hands a kindred
god,

Howbeit necessity compels me so
That I must dare it, and our Zeus
commands

With a most inevitable word. Ho,
thou !

High-thoughted son of Themis, who is
sage !

Thee loath, I loath must rivet fast in
chains

Against this rocky height unclimb by
man,

Where never human voice nor face
shall find

Out thee who lov'st them; and thy
beauty's flower,

Scorched in the sun's clear heat, shall
fade away.

Night shall come up with garniture of
stars

To comfort thee with shadow, and the
sun

Disperse with retrickt beams the
morning-frosts;

But through all changes, sense of pres-
ent woe

Shall vex thee sore, because with
none of them

There comes a hand to free. Such
fruit is plucked

From love of man ! And in that thou,
a god,

Didst brave the wrath of gods, and
give away

Undue respect to mortals, for that
crime

Thou art adjudged to guard this joy-
less rock,

Erect, unslumbering, bending not the
knee,

And many a cry and unavailing moan
To utter on the air. For Zeus is stern,
And new-made kings are cruel.

Strength. Be it so.
Why loiter in vain pity ? Why not
hate

A god the gods hate ? — one, too, who
betrayed

Thy glory unto men ?

Hephaestus. An awful thing
Is kinship joined to friendship.

Strength. Grant it be:

Is disobedience to the Father's word
A possible thing ? Dost quail not

more for that ?

Hephaestus. Thou, at least, art a
stern one, ever bold.

Strength. Why, if I wept, it were no
remedy;

And do not thou spend labor on the air
To bootless uses.

Hephaestus. Cursed handicraft !
I curse and hate thee, O my craft !

Strength. Why hate
Thy craft most plainly innocent of all
These pending ills ?

Hephaestus. I would some other hand
Were here to work it !

Strength. All work hath its pain,
Except to rule the gods. There is
none free

Except King Zeus.

Hephaestus. I know it very well;
I argue not against it.

Strength. Why not, then,
Make haste and lock the fetters over

him,

Lest Zeus behold thee lagging ?

Hephaestus. Here be chains.
Zeus may behold these.

Strength. Seize him; strike amain;
Strike with the hammer on each side

his hands;

Rivet him to the rock.

Hephaestus. The work is done,
And thoroughly done.

Strength. Still faster grapple him;
Wedge him in deeper; leave no inch

to stir.

He's terrible for finding a way out
From the irremediable.

Hephaestus. Here's an arm, at least,
Grappled past freeing.

Strength. Now, then, buckle me
The other securely. Let this wise one

learn

He's duller than our Zeus.

Hephaestus. Oh, none but he
Accuse me justly.

Strength. Now, straight through the
chest,

Take him and bite him with the
clenching tooth

Of the adamantine wedge, and rivet
him.

Hephaestus. Alas, Prometheus, what
thou sufferest here

I sorrow over.

Strength. Dost thou flinch again,
And breathe groans for the enemies
of Zeus?

Beware lest thine own pity find thee
out.

Hephæstus. Thou dost behold a spec-
tacle that turns
The sight o' the eyes to pity.

Strength. I behold
A sinner suffer his sin's penalty,
But lash the thongs about his sides.

Hephæstus. So much
I must do. Urge no farther than I
must.

Strength. Ay, but I will urge! and,
with shout on shout,
Will hound thee at this quarry. Get
thee down,
And ring a main the iron round his
legs.

Hephæstus. That work was not long
doing.

Strength. Heavily now
Let fall the strokes upon the perfo-
rant gyves;
For he who rates the work has a
heavy hand.

Hephæstus. Thy speech is savage as
thy shape.

Strength. Be thou
Gentle and tender, but revile not me
For the firm will and the untrue-
killing hate.

Hephæstus. Let us go. He is net-
ted round with chains.

Strength. Here, now, taunt on! and,
having spoiled the gods
Of honors, crown withal thy mortal
men

Who live a whole day out. Why,
how could they
Draw off from thee one single of thy
griefs?

Methinks the Daemons gave thee a
wrong name,

Prometheus, which means Providence,
because

Thou dost thyself need providence to
see

Thy roll and ruin from the top of
doom.

Prometheus (alone). O holy Æther,
and swift-winged Winds,
And River-wells, and Laughter innu-
merous

Of yon sea-waves! Earth, mother of
us all,
And all-viewing cyclic Sun, I cry on
you,—

Behold me a god, what I endure from
gods!

Behold, with throe on throe,
How, wasted by this woe,
I wrestle down the myriad years of
time!

Behold how, fast around me,
The new King of the happy ones
sublime

Has flung the chain he forged, has
shamed and bound me!

Woe, woe! to-day's woe and the
coming morrow's

I cover with one groan. And where
is found me

A limit to these sorrows?
And yet what word do I say? I
have foreknown

Clearly all things that should be;
nothing done

Comes sudden to my soul; and I
must bear

What is ordained with patience,
being aware

Necessity doth front the universe
With an invincible gesture. Yet
this curse

Which strikes me now I find it hard
to brave

In silence or in speech. Because I
gave

Honor to mortals, I have yoked my
soul

To this compelling fate. Because I
stole

The secret fount of fire, whose bub-
bles went
Over the ferule's brim, and man-
ward sent

Art's mighty means and perfect ru-
diment,

That sin I expiate in this agony,
Hung here in fetters, 'neath the
blanching sky.

Ah, ah me! what a sound!
What a fragrance sweeps up from a
pinion unseen

Of a god, or a mortal, or nature be-
twixen,

Sweeping up to this rock where the
Earth has her bound,

To have sight of my pangs, or some
guerdon obtain.

Lo, a god in the anguish, a god in the
chain!

The god Zeus hateth sore,
And his gods hate again,
As many as tread on his glorified
floor,

Because I loved mortals too much
evermore.
Alas me ! what a murmur and motion
I hear,
As of birds flying near !
And the air undersings
The light stroke of their wings,
And all life that approaches I wait for
in fear.

Chorus of Sea-nymphs, 1st strophe.
Fear nothing ! our troop
Floats lovingly up
With a quick-oaring stroke
Of wings steered to the rock,
Having softened the soul of our
father below.
For the gales of swift-bearing have
sent me a sound,
And the clang of the iron, the mal-
lested blow,
Smote down the profound
Of my caverns of old,
And struck the red light in a blush
from my brow,
Till I sprang up unsandalled, in haste
to behold,
And rushed forth on my chariot of
wings manifold.

Prometheus. Alas me ! alas me !
Ye offspring of Tethys, who bore at
her breast
Many children, and eke of Oceanus, he,
Coiling still around earth with per-
petual unrest !
Behold me and see
How transfix'd with the fang
Of a fetter I hang
On the high-jutting rocks of this fis-
sure, and keep
An uncoveted watch o'er the world
and the deep.

Chorus, 1st antistrophe.
I behold thee, Prometheus; yet now,
yet now,
A terrible cloud whose rain is tears
Sweeps over mine eyes that witness
how
Thy body appears
Hung awaste on the rocks by infran-
gible chains;
For now is the hand, new the rudder,
that steers
The ship of Olympus through surge
and wind,
And of old things passed, no track is
behind.

Prometheus. Under earth, under
Hades,
Where the home of the shade is,
All into the deep, deep Tartarus,
I would he had hurled me adown.
I would he had plunged me, fastened
thus
In the knotted chain, with the savage
clang,
All into the dark, where there should
be none,
Neither god nor another, to laugh and
see.
But now the winds sing through
and shake
The hurtling chains wherin I
hang,
And I in my naked sorrows make
Much mirth for my enemy.

Chorus, 2d strophe.
Nay ! who of the gods hath a heart so
stern
As to use thy woe for a mock and
mirth ?
Who would not turn more mild to learn
Thy sorrows ? who of the heaven
and earth
Save Zeus ? But he
Right wrathfully
Bears on his sceptral soul unbent,
And rules thereby the heavenly
seed,
Nor will he pause till he content
His thirsty heart in a finished deed,
Or till Another shall appear,
To win by fraud, to seize by fear,
The hard-to-be-captured govern-
ment.

Prometheus. Yet even of me he shall
have need,
That monarch of the blessed seed,—
Of me, of me who now am cursed
By his fetters dire,—
To wring my secret out withal,
And learn by whom his sceptre
shall
Be filched from him, as was at first
His heavenly fire.
But he never shall enchant me
With his honey-lipped persua-
sion;
Never, never, shall he daunt me,
With the oath and threat of passion,
Into speaking as they want me,
Till he loose this savage chain,
And accept the expiation
Of my sorrow in his pain.

Chorus, 2d antistrophe.
 Thou art, sooth, a brave god,
 And, for all thou hast borne
 From the stroke of the rod,
 Nought relaxest from scorn.
 But thou speakest unto me
 Too free and unworn;
 And a terror strikes through me
 And festers my soul,
 And I fear, in the roll
 Of the storm, for thy fate
 In the ship far from shore;
 Since the son of Saturnus is hard in
 his hate,
 And unmoved in his heart ever-
 more.

Prometheus. I know that Zeus is stern;
 I know he metes his justice by his will;
 And yet his soul shall learn
 More softness when once broken by
 this ill;
 And, curbing his unconquerable
 vaunt,
 He shall rush on in fear to meet with
 me

Who rush to meet with him in agony,
 To issues of harmonious covenant.

Chorus. Remove the veil from all
 things, and relate
 The story to us,—of what crime ac-
 cused,
 Zeus smites thee with dishonorable
 pangs.
 Speak, if to teach us do not grieve
 thyself.

Prometheus. The utterance of these
 things is torture to me,
 But so, too, is their silence: each way
 lies

Woe strong as fate.
 When gods began with wrath,
 And war rose up between their starry
 brows,
 Some choosing to cast Chronos from
 his throne
 That Zeus might king it there, and
 some in haste
 With opposite oaths, that they would
 have no Zeus
 To rule the gods forever,—I, who
 brought
 The counsel I thought meetest, could
 not move
 The Titans, children of the Heaven
 and Earth.
 What time, disdaining in their rugged
 souls

My subtle machinations, they as-
 sumed
 It was an easy thing for force to
 take
 The mastery of fate. My mother,
 then,
 Who is called not only Themis, but
 Earth too,
 (Her single beauty joys in many
 names)
 Did teach me with reiterant prophecy
 What future should be, and how con-
 quering gods
 Should not prevail by strength and
 violence,
 But by guile only. When I told them
 so,
 They would not deign to contemplate
 the truth
 On all sides round; whereat I deemed
 it best
 To lead my willing mother upwardly,
 And set my Themis face to face with
 Zeus
 As willing to receive her. Tartarus,
 With its abysmal cloister of the Dark,
 Because I gave that counsel, covers
 up
 The antique Chronos and his siding
 hosts,
 And, by that counsel helped, the king
 of gods
 Hath recompensed me with these bit-
 ter pangs;
 For kingship wears a cancer at the
 heart,—
 Distrust in friendship. Do ye also
 ask
 What crime it is for which he tortures
 me?
 That shall be clear before you. When
 at first
 He filled his father's throne, he,in-
 instantly
 Made various gifts of glory to the
 gods,
 And dealt the empire out. Alone of
 men,
 Of miserable men, he took no count,
 But yearned to sweep their track off
 from the world,
 And plant a newer race there. Not a
 god
 Resisted such desire, except myself.
 I dared it! I drew mortals back to
 light,
 From meditated ruin deep as hell!
 For which wrong I am bent down in
 these pangs

Dreadful to suffer, mournful to behold,
And I who pitied man am thought myself
Unworthy of pity; while I render out
Deep rhythms of anguish 'neath the harping hand
That strikes me thus,—a sight to shame your Zeus!

Chorus. Hard as thy chains, and cold as all these rocks,
Is he, Prometheus, who withholds his heart
From joining in thy woe. I yearned before
To fly this sight; and, now I gaze on it,
I sicken inwards.

Prometheus. To my friends, indeed,
I must be a sad sight.

Chorus. And didst thou sin
No more than so?

Prometheus. I did restrain besides
My mortals from premeditating death.

Chorus. How didst thou medicine
the plague-fear of death?

Prometheus. I set blind Hopes to inhabit in their house.

Chorus. By that gift thou didst help thy mortals well.

Prometheus. I gave them also fire.

Chorus. And have they now, Those creatures of a day, the red-eyed fire?

Prometheus. They have, and shall learn by it many arts.

Chorus. And truly for such sins
Zeus tortures thee,

And will remit no anguish? Is there set

No limit before thee to thine agony?

Prometheus. No other—only what seems good to him.

Chorus. And how will it seem good? what hope remains?

Seest thou not that thou hast sinned? But that thou hast sinned

It glads me not to speak of, and grieves thee;

Then let it pass from both, and seek thyself

Some outlet from distress.

Prometheus. It is in truth An easy thing to stand aloof from pain,
And lavish exhortation and advice
On one vexed sorely by it. I have known

All in preview. By my choice, my choice,
I freely sinned,—I will confess my sin,—

And, helping mortals, found mine own despair.

I did not think indeed that I should pine
Beneath such pangs against such skyey rocks,

Doomed to this drear hill, and no neighboring

Of any life. But mourn not ye for griefs
I bear to-day: hear rather, dropping down

To the plain, how other woes creep on to me,

And learn the consummation of my doom.
Beseech you, nymphs, beseech you,

grieve for me Who now am grieving; for Grief walks the earth,

And sits down at the foot of each by turns.

Chorus. We hear the deep clash of thy words,

Prometheus, and obey.
And I spring with a rapid foot away

From the rushing ear and the holy air,

The track of birds;
And I drop to the rugged ground,

and there

Await the tale of thy despair.

OCEANUS enters.

Oceanus. I reach the bourne of my weary road

Where I may see and answer thee,

Prometheus, in thine agony.
On the back of the quick-winged bird

I glode,
And I bridled him in With the will of a god.

Behold, thy sorrow aches in me Constrained by the force of kin.

Nay, though that tie were all undone,

For the life of none beneath the sun Would I seek a larger benison

Than I seek for thine.
And thou shalt learn my words are

truth,
That no fair parlance of the mouth Grows falsely out of mine.

Now give me a deed to prove my faith;
For no faster friend is named in breath
Than I, Oceanus, am thine
Prometheus. Ha! what has brought thee? Hast thou also come
To look upon my woe? How hast thou dared
To leave the depths called after thee?
the caves
Self-hewn, and self-roofed with spontaneous rock,
To visit Earth, the mother of my chain?
Hast come, indeed, to view my doom, and mourn
That I should sorrow thus? Gaze on, and see
How I, the fast friend of your Zeus,
— how I
The erector of the empire in his hand,
Am bent beneath that hand in this despair.
Oceanus. Prometheus, I behold; and I would fain
Exhort thee, though already subtle enough,
To a better wisdom. Titan, know thyself,
And take new softness to thy manners, since
A new king rules the gods. If words like these,
Harsh words and trenchant, thou wilt fling abroad,
Zeus haply, though he sit so far and high,
May hear thee do it, and so this wrath of his,
Which now affects thee fiercely, shall appear
A mere child's sport at vengeance.
Wretched god,
Rather dismiss the passion which thou hast,
And seek a change from grief. Perhaps I seem
To address thee with old saws and outworn sense;
Yet such a curse, Prometheus, surely waits
On lips that speak too proudly: thou, meantime,
Art none the meeker, nor dost yield a jot
To evil circumstance, preparing still
To swell the account of grief with other griefs

Than what are borne. Beseech thee, use me, then,
For counsel: do not spurn against the pricks,
Seeing that who reigns, reigns by cruelty
Instead of right. And now I go from hence,
And will endeavor if a power of mine
Can break thy fetters through. For thee — be calm,
And smooth thy words from passion. Knowest thou not
Of perfect knowledge, thou who knowest too much,
That, where the tongue wags, ruin never lags?

Prometheus. I gratulate thee who hast shared and dared All things with me, except their penalty.
Enough so! leave these thoughts. It cannot be
That thou shouldst move him. He may not be moved;
And thou, beware of sorrow on this road.

Oceanus. Ay! ever wiser for another's use
Than thine. The event, and not the prophecy,
Attests it to me. Yet, where now I rush,
Thy wisdom hath no power to drag me back,
Because I glory, glory, to go hence,
And win for thee deliverance from thy pangs,
As a free gift from Zeus.

Prometheus. Why there, again, I give thee gratulation and applause. Thou lackest no good will. But, as for deeds,
Do nought! 'twere all done vainly, helping nought,
Whatever thou wouldst do. Rather take rest,
And keep thyself from evil. If I grieve,
I do not therefore wish to multiply The griefs of others. Verily, not so!
For still my brother's doom doth vex my soul,—
My brother Atlas, standing in the west,
Shouldering the column of the heaven and earth,
A difficult burden! I have also seen,

And pitied as I saw, the earth-born one,
The inhabitant of old Cilician caves,
The great war-monster of the hundred heads,
(All taken and bowed beneath the violent Hand)
Typhon the fierce, who did resist the gods,
And, hissing slaughter from his dreadful jaws,
Flash out ferocious glory from his eyes
As if to storm the throne of Zeus.
Whereat,
The sleepless arrow of Zeus flew straight at him,
The headlong bolt of thunder breathing flame,
And struck him downward from his eminence
Of exultation; through the very soul
It struck him, and his strength was withered up
To ashes, thunder-blasted. Now he lies,
A helpless trunk, supinely, at full-length
Beside the strait of ocean, spurred into
By roots of Aetna, high upon whose tops
Hephaestus sits, and strikes the flashing ore.
From thence the rivers of fire shall burst away
Hereafter, and devour with savage jaws
The equal plains of fruitful Sicily,
Such passion he shall boil back in hot darts
Of an insatiate fury and sough of flame,
Fallen Typhon, howsoever struck and charred
By Zeus's bolted thunder. But for thee,
Thou art not so unlearned as to need
My teaching; let thy knowledge save thyself.
I quaff the full cup of a present doom,
And wait till Zeus hath quenched his will in wrath.

Oceanus. Prometheus, art thou ignorant of this,
That words do medicine anger?

Prometheus. If the word
With seasonable softness touch the soul,
And, where the parts are ulcerous,
sear them not
By any rudeness.

Oceanus. With a noble aim
To dare as nobly—is there harm in that?
Dost thou discern it? Teach me.
Prometheus. I discern
Vain aspiration, unresolute work.
Oceanus. Then suffer me to bear the brunt of this,
Since it is profitable that one who is wise
Should seem not wise at all.
Prometheus. And such would seem
My very crime.
Oceanus. In truth thine argument
Sends me back home.
Prometheus. Lest any lament for me
Should cast thee down to hate.
Oceanus. The hate of him
Who sits a new king on the absolute throne?
Prometheus. Beware of him, lest thine heart grieve by him.
Oceanus. Thy doom, Prometheus, be my teacher!
Prometheus. Go!
Depart! Beware! And keep the mind thou hast.
Oceanus. Thy words drive after, as I rush before.
Lo, my four-footed bird sweeps smooth and wide
The flats of air with balanced pinions, glad
To bend his knee at home in the ocean-stall.

[OCEANUS departs.]

Chorus, 1st strophe.
I moan thy fate, I moan for thee,
Prometheus! From my eyes too tender
Drop after drop incessantly.
The tears of my heart's pity render
My cheeks wet from their fountains free;
Because that Zeus, the stern and cold,
Whose law is taken from his breast,
Uplifts his sceptre manifest
Over the gods of old.

1st antistrophe.
All the land is moaning
With a murmured plaint to-day;
All the mortal nations
Having habitations
In the holy Asia

Are a dirge entoning
For thine honor and thy brothers',
Once majestic beyond others
In the old belief, —
Now are groaning in the groaning
Of thy deep-voiced grief.

2d strope
Mourn the maids inhabitant
Of the Colchian land,
Who with white, calm bosoms stand
In the battle's roar :
Mourn the Scythian tribes that haunt
The verge of earth, Maeotis' shore.

2d antistrophe.
Yea ! Arabia's battle crown,
And dwellers in the beetling
town
Mt. Caucasus sublimely nears —
An iron squadron, thundering
down
With the sharp-prowed spears.

But one other before have I seen to
remain
By invincible pain,
Bound and vanquished, — one Titan !
'twas Atlas, who bears
In a curse from the gods, by that
strength of his own
Which he evermore wears,
The weight of the heaven on his shoul-
der alone,
While he sighs up the stars;
And the tides of the ocean wail, burst-
ing their bars;
Murmurs still the profound,
And black Hades roars up through the
chasm of the ground,
And the fountains of pure-running
rivers moan low

In a pathos of woe.
Prometheus. Beseech you, think not
I am silent thus
Through pride or scorn. I only gnaw
my heart
With meditation, seeing myself so
wroned.
For see — their honors to these new-
made gods,
What other gave but I, and dealt them
out
With distribution ? Ay ! but here I
am dumb;
For here I should repeat your knowl-
edge to you,
If I spake aught. List rather to the
deeds

I did for mortals; how, being fools
before,
I made them wise and true in aim of
soul.
And let me tell you, — not as taunt-
ing men,
But teaching you the intention of my
gifts, —
How, first beholding, they beheld in
vain,
And, hearing, heard not, but, like
shapes in dreams,
Mixed all things wildly down the te-
dious time,
Nor knew to build a house against the
sun
With wicketed sides, nor any wood-
craft knew,
But lived, like silly ants, beneath the
ground
In hollow caves unsunned. There
came to them
No steadfast sign of winter, nor of
spring
Flower-perfumed, nor of summer full
of fruit,
But blindly and lawlessly they did all
things,
Until I taught them how the stars do
rise
And set in mystery, and devised for
them
Number, the inducer of philoso-
phies,
The synthesis of letters, and, beside,
The artificer of all things, memory,
That sweet muse-mother. I was first
to yoke
The servile beasts in couples, carry-
ing
An heirdom of man's burdens on their
backs.
I joined to chariots, steeds, that love
the bit
They champ at, — the chief pomp of
golden ease.
And none but I originated ships,
The seaman's chariots, wanderings on
the brine
With linen wings. And I — oh, mis-
erable ! —
Who did devise for mortals all these
arts,
Have no device left now to save my-
self
From the woe I suffer.
Chorus. Most unseemly woe
Thou sufferest, and dost stagger from
the sense

Bewildered ! Like a bad leech falling sick.
 Thou art faint at soul, and canst not find the drugs
 Required to save thyself.

Prometheus. Harken the rest,
 And marvel further, what more arts and means
 I did invent,—this, greatest: if a man
 Fell sick, there was no cure, nor esculet
 Nor chrism nor liquid, but for lack of drugs
 Men pined and wasted, till I showed them all
 Those mixtures of emollient remedies
 Whereby they might be rescued from disease.
 I fixed the various rules of mantic art,
 Discerned the vision from the common dream,
 Instructed them in vocal auguries
 Hard to interpret, and defined as plain
 The way-side omens,—flights of crook-clawed birds,—
 Showed which are by their nature fortunate,
 And which not so, and what the food of each,
 And what the hates, affections, social needs
 Of all to one another,—taught what sign
 Of visceral lightness, colored to a shade,
 May charm the genial gods, and what fair spots
 Command the lung and liver. Burning so
 The limbs incased in fat, and the long chine,
 I led my mortals on to an art astruse,
 And cleared their eyes to the image in the fire,
 Erst filmed in dark. Enough said now of this.
 For the other helps of man hid underground,
 The iron and the brass, silver and gold,
 Can any dare affirm he found them out
 Before me ? None, I know ! unless he choose

To lie in his vaunt. In one word learn the whole,—
 That all arts came to mortals from Prometheus.
Chorus. Give mortals now no inexpedient help,
 Neglecting thine own sorrow. I have hope still
 To see thee, breaking from the fetter here,
 Stand up as strong as Zeus.
Prometheus. This ends not thus, The oracular fate ordains. I must be bowed
 By infinite woes and pangs to escape this chain.
 Necessity is stronger than mine art.
Chorus. Who holds the helm of that
 . Necessity ?
Prometheus. The threefold Fates and the unforgetting Furies.
Chorus. Is Zeus less absolute than these are ?
Prometheus. Yea, And therefore cannot fly what is ordained.
Chorus. What is ordained for Zeus, except to be
 A king forever?
Prometheus. 'Tis too early yet For thee to learn it: ask no more.
Chorus. Perhaps Thy secret may be something holy ?
Prometheus. Turn To another matter: this, it is not time To speak abroad, but utterly to veil Insilence. For by that same secret kept, I 'scape this chain's dishonor, and its woe.

Chorus, 1st strophe.
 Never, oh never,
 May Zeus, the all-giver,
 Wrestle down from his throne
 In that might of his own
 To antagonize mine !
 Nor let me delay
 As I bend on my way
 Toward the gods of the shrine
 Where the altar is full
 Of the blood of the bull,
 Near the tossing brine
 Of Ocean my father.
 May no sin be sped in the word that is said,
 But my vow be rather Consummated,
 Nor evermore fail, nor evermore pine.

1st antistrophe.

'Tis sweet to have
Life lengthened out
With hopes proved brave
By the very doubt,
Till the spirit infold
Those manifest joys which were
foretold.
But I thrill to behold
Thee, victim doomed,
By the countless cares
And the drear despairs
Forever consumed,—
And all because thou, who art fear-
less now
Of Zeus above,
Didst overflow for mankind below
With a free-souled, reverent love.

Ah, friend, behold and see !
What's all the beauty of humanity ?
Can it be fair ?
What's all the strength ? Is it
strong ?
And what hope can they bear,
These dying livers, living one day
long ?
Ah, seest thou not, my friend,
How feeble and slow,
And like a dream, doth go
This poor blind manhood, drifted
from its end ?
And how no mortal wranglings
can confuse
The harmony of Zeus ?

Prometheus, I have learnt these
things
From the sorrow in thy face.
Another song did fold its wings
Upon my lips in other days,
When round the bath and round
the bed
The hymeneal chant instead
I sang for thee, and smiled,
And thou didst lead, with gifts and
vows,
Hesione, my father's child,
To be thy wedded spouse.

To enters.

Io. What land is this ? what people
is here ?
And who is he that writhes, I see,
In the rock-hung chain ?
Now what is the crime that hath
brought thee to pain ?
Now what is the land — make answer
free —

Which I wander through in my wrong
and fear ?
Ah, ah, ah me !
The gad-fly stingeth to agony !
O Earth, keep off that phantasm pale
Of earth-born Argus ! — ah ! I quail
When my soul descries
That herdsman with the myrial eyes
Which seem, as he comes, one crafty
eye.
Graves hide him not, though he
should die;
But he doggetteth me in my misery
From the roots of death, on high, on
high ;
And along the sands of the siding
deep,
All famine-worn, he follows me,
And his waxen reed doth undersound
The waters round,
And giveth a measure that giveth
sleep.
Woe, woe, woe !
Where shall my weary course be
done ?
What wouldst thou with me, Saturn's
son ?
And in what have I sinned, that I
should go
Thus yoked to grief by thine hand
forever ?
Ah, ah ! dost vex me so
That I madden and shiver
Stung through with dread ?
Flash the fire down to burn me !
Heave the earth up to cover me !
Plunge me in the deep, with the salt
waves over me,
That the sea-beasts may be fed !
O king do not spurn me
In my prayer !
For this wandering everlonger,
evermore,
Hath overworn me,
And I know not on what shore
I may rest from my despair.
Chorus. Hearest thou what the ox-
horned maiden saith ?
Prometheus. How could I choose
but harken what she saith,
The frenzied maiden ? — Inachus's
child ? —
Who love-warms Zeus's heart, and
now is lashed
By Heré's hate along the unending
ways ?

Io. Who taught thee to articulate
that name,—
My father's? Speak to his child
By grief and shame defiled!
Who art thou, victim, thou who dost
acclaim
Mine anguish in true words on the
wide air,
And callest, too, by name the curse
that came
From Heré unaware,
To waste and pierce me with its madden-
ing goad?
Ah, ah, I leap,
With the pang of the hungry; I bound
on the road;
I am driven by my doom;
I am overcome
By the wrath of an enemy strong and
deep!
Are any of those who have tasted
pain,
Alas! as wretched as I?
Now tell me plain, doth ought remain
For my soul to endure beneath the sky?
Is there any help to be holpen by?
If knowledge be in thee, let it be
said!
Cry aloud — cry
To the wandering, woful maid.

Prometheus. Whatever thou wouldst
learn, I will declare;
No riddle upon my lips, but such
straight words
As friends should use to each other
when they talk.
Thou seest Prometheus, who gave
mortals fire.

Io. O common help of all men,
known of all,
O miserable Prometheus, for what
cause

Dost thou endure thus?

Prometheus. I have done with wail
For my own griefs but lately.

Io. Wilt thou not
Vouchsafe the boon to me?

Prometheus. Say what thou wilt,
For I vouchsafe all.

Io. Speak, then, and reveal
Who shut thee in this chasm.

Prometheus. The will of Zeus,
The hand of his Hephaestus.

Io. And what crime
Dost expiate so?

Prometheus. Enough for thee I
have told

In so much only.

Io. Nay, but show besides
The limit of my wandering, and the
time
Which yet is lacking to fulfil my
grief.
Prometheus. Why, not to know were
better than to know
For such as thou.

Io. Beseech thee, blind me not
To that which I must suffer.

Prometheus. If I do,
The reason is not that I grudge a
boon.

Io. What reason, then, prevents thy
speaking out?

Prometheus. No grudging, but a
fear to break thine heart.

Io. Less care for me, I pray thee.
Certainty

I count for advantage.

Prometheus. Thou wilt have it so,
And therefore I must speak. Now
hear —

Chorus. Not yet.
Give half the guerdon my way. Let
us learn
First what the curse is that befell the
maid,

Her own voice telling her own wast-
ing woes:

The sequence of that anguish shall
await

The teaching of thy lips.

Prometheus. It doth behoove
That thou, maid *Io*, shouldst vouch-
safe to these
The grace they pray, — the more, be-
cause they are called
Thy father's sisters; since to open out
And mourn out grief, where it is pos-
sible

To draw a tear from the audience, is
a work

That pays its own price well.

Io. I cannot choose
But trust you, nymphs, and tell you
all ye ask,
In clear words, though I sob amid
my speech
In speaking of the storm curse sent
from Zeus,
And of my beauty, from which height
it took
Its swoop on me, poor wretch! left
thus deformed
And monstrous to your eyes. For
evermore
Around my virgin-chamber, wander-
ing went

The nightly visions which entreated
me
With syllabled smooth sweetness,—
“Blessed maid,
Why lengthen out thy maiden hours,
when fate
Permits the noblest spousal in the
world?
When Zeus burns with the arrow of
thy love,
And fain would touch thy beauty?—
Maiden, thou
Despise not Zeus! depart to Lerne’s
mead
That’s green around thy father’s
flocks and stalls,
Until the passion of the heavenly
Eye
Be quenched in sight.” Such dreams
did all night long
Constrain me, — me, unhappy! — till I
dared
To tell my father how they trod the
dark
With visionary steps. Whereat he
sent
His frequent heralds to the Pythian
fane,
And also to Dodona, and inquired
How best, by act or speech, to please
the gods.
The same returning brought back
oracles
Of doubtful sense, indefinite response,
Dark to interpret; but at last there
came
To Inachus an answer that was clear,
Thrown straight as any bolt, and
spoken out,—
This: “He should drive me from my
home and land,
And bid me wander to the extreme
verge
Of all the earth; or, if he willed it
not,
Should have a thunder with a fiery
eye
Leap straight from Zeus to burn up
all his race
To the last root of it.” By which
Loxian word
Subdued, he drove me forth, and shut
me out.
He loath, me loath; but Zeus’s violent
bit
Compelled him to the deed: when in-
stantly
My body and soul were changèd and
distraught,

And, hornèd as ye see, and spurred
along
By the fanged insect, with a maniac
leap
I rushed on to Cenchrea’s limpid
stream,
And Lerne’s fountain-water. There,
the earth-born,
The herdsman Argus, most immitiga-
ble
Of wrath, did find me out, and track
me out
With countless eyes set staring at my
steps;
And though an unexpected sudden
doom
Drew him from life, I, curse-torment-
ed still,
Am driven from land to land before
the scourge
The gods hold o’er me So thou hast
heard the past;
And, if a bitter future thou canst tell,
Speak on. I charge thee, do not flat-
ter me,
Through pity, with false words; for
in my mind
Deceiving works more shame than
torturing doth.

Chorus.

Ah, silence here!
Nevermore, nevermore,
Would I languish for
The stranger’s word
To thrill in mine ear—
Nevermore for the wrong and the woe
and the fear
So hard to behold,
So cruel to bear,
Piercing my soul with a double-edged
sword.
Of a sliding cold.
Ah, Fate! ah, me!
I shudder to see
This wandering maid in her agony.

Prometheus. Grief is too quick in
thee, and fear too full:
Be patient till thou hast learnt the rest.

Chorus. Speak: teach,
To those who are sad already, it
seems sweet,
By clear foreknowledge to make per-
fect, pain.

Prometheus. The boon ye asked me
first was lightly won;
For first ye asked the story of this
maid’s grief,

As her own lips might tell it. Now
remains
To list what other sorrows she so
young
Must bear from Heré. Inachus's
child,
O thou! drop down thy soul my
weighty words,
And measure out the landmarks
which are set
To end thy wandering. Toward the
orient sun
First turn thy face from mine, and
journey on
Along the desert-flats till thou shalt
come
Where Scythia's shepherd-peoples
dwell aloft,
Perched in wheeled wagons under
woven roofs,
And twang the rapid arrow pâst the
bow.
Approach them not, but, siding in
thy course
The rugged shore-rocks resonant to
the sea,
Depart that country. On the left
hand dwell
The iron-workers, called the Chaly-
bes,
Of whom beware, for certes they are
uncouth,
And nowise bland to strangers.
Reaching so
The stream Hybristes (well the
scorner called),
Attempt no passage, — it is hard to
pass, —
Or ere thou come to Caucasus itself,
That highest of mountains, where the
river leaps
The precipice in his strength. Thou
must toil up
Those mountain-tops that neighbor
with the stars,
And tread the south way, and draw
near, at last,
The Amazonian host that hateth
man,
Inhabitants of Themiscyra, close
Upon Thermodon, where the sea's
rough jaw
Doth gnash at Salmydessa, and pro-
vide
A cruel host to seamen, and to ships
A stepdame. They, with unreluctant
hand,
Shall lead thee on and on till thou
arrive

Just where the ocean-gates show nar-
rowest
On the Cimmerian isthmus. Leaving
which,
Bechoothes thee swim with fortitude of
soul
The strait Maeotis. Ay, and ever-
more
That traverse shall be famous on
men's lips,
That strait called Bosphorus, the
horned one's road,
So named because of thee, who so
wilt pass
From Europe's plain to Asia's conti-
nent.
How think ye, nymphs? the king of
gods appears
Impartial in ferocious deeds? Be-
hold!
The god desirous of this mortal's love
Hath cursed her with these wander-
ings. Ah, fair child,
Thou hast met a bitter groom for bri-
dal troth!
For all thou yet hast heard can only
prove
The incompleted prelude of thy doom.
Io. Ah, ah!
Prometheus. Is't thy turn now to
shriek and moan?
How wilt thou, when thou hast har-
kened what remains?
Chorus. Besides the grief thou hast
told, can aught remain?
Prometheus. A sea of foredoomed
evil worked to storm.
Io. What boots my life, then? why
not cast myself
Down headlong from this miserable
rock,
That, dashed against the flats, I may
redeem
My soul from sorrow? Better once
to die
Than day by day to suffer.
Prometheus. Verily,
It would be hard for thee to bear my
woe
For whom it is appointed not to die.
Death frees from woe; but I before
me see
In all my far preview not a bound
To all I suffer, ere that Zeus shall fall
From being a king.
Io. And can it ever be
That Zeus shall fall from empire?
Prometheus. *Thou,* methinks,
Wouldst take some joy to see it.

<i>Io.</i>	Could I choose ? I who endure such pangs now, by that god !	<i>Chorus.</i>	Vouchsafe, O god, The one grace of the twain to her who prays,
<i>Prometheus.</i>	Learn from me, therefore, that the event shall be.		The next to me, and turn back nei- ther prayer
<i>Io.</i>	By whom shall his imperial sceptred hand Be emptied so ?		Dishonored by denial. To herself Recount the future wandering of her feet;
<i>Prometheus.</i>	Himself shall spoil himself, Through his idiotic counsels.		Then point me to the looser of thy chain,
<i>Io.</i>	How ? declare, Unless the word bring evil.		Because I yearn to know him.
<i>Prometheus.</i>	He shall wed, And in the marriage-bond be joined to grief.	<i>Prometheus.</i>	Since ye will, Of absolute will, this knowledge, I will set
<i>Io.</i>	A heavenly bride, or human ? Speak it out,		No contrary against it, nor keep back A word of all ye ask for. Io, first To thee I must relate thy wandering course
<i>Prometheus.</i>	Why should I say which ?		Far winding. As I tell it, write it down
<i>Io.</i>	It ought not to be uttered, verily.		In thy soul's book of memories. When thou hast past
<i>Io.</i>	Then It is his wife shall tear him from his throne ?		The refluent bound that parts two continents, Track on the footsteps of the orient sun
<i>Prometheus.</i>	It is his wife shall bear a son to him More mighty than the father.		In his own fire across the roar of seas,—
<i>Io.</i>	From this doom Hath he no refuge ?		Fly till thou hast reached the Gor- gonian flats
<i>Prometheus.</i>	None: or ere that I Loosed from these fetters—		Beside Cithene. There the Phorci- des,
<i>Io.</i>	Yea; but who shall loose While Zeus is adverse ?		Three ancient maidens, live, with shape of swan, One tooth between them, and one common eye, On whom the sun doth never look at all
<i>Prometheus.</i>	Onewho is born of thee: It is ordained so.		With all his rays, nor evermore the moon
<i>Io.</i>	What is this thou sayest ? A son of mine shall liberate thee from woe ?		When she looks through the night.
<i>Prometheus.</i>	After ten generations count three more, And find him in the third.		Anear to whom Are the Gorgon sisters three, en- clothed with wings, With twisted snakes for ringlets, man-abhorred:
<i>Io.</i>	The oracle Remains obscure.		There is no mortal gazes in their face, And gazing can breathe on. I speak of such
<i>Prometheus.</i>	And search it not to learn Thine own griefs from it.		To guard thee from their horror. Ay, and list
<i>Io.</i>	Point me not to a good To leave me straight bereaved.		Another tale of a dreadful sight: be- ware
<i>Prometheus.</i>	I am prepared To grant thee one of two things.		The Griffins, those unbarking dogs of Zeus,
<i>Io.</i>	But which two ? Set them before me; grant me power to choose.		Those sharp-mouthed dogs! — and the Arimaspians host
<i>Prometheus.</i>	I grant it; choose now! Shall I name aloud What griefs remain to wound thee, or what hand Shall save me out of mine ?		Of one-eyed horsemen, habiting be- side

The river of Pluto that runs bright
with gold:
Approach them not, beseech thee.
Presently
Thou'l come to a distant land, a
dusky tribe
Of dwellers at the fountain of the
Sun,
Whence flows the River Aethiops,
wind along
Its banks, and turn off at the cata-
racts,
Just as the Nile pours from the Byb-
line hills
His holy and sweet wave: his course
shall guide
Thine own to that triangular Nile-
ground
Where, Io, is ordained for thee and
thine
A lengthened exile. Have I said in
this
Aught darkly or incompletely?—
now repeat
The question, make the knowledge
fuller! Lo,
I have more leisure than I covet here.
Chorus. If thou canst tell us aught
that's left untold,
Or loosely told, of her most dreary
flight,
Declare it straight; but, if thou hast
uttered all,
Grant us that latter grace for which
we prayed,
Remembering how we prayed it.
Prometheus. She has heard
The uttermost of her wandering.
There it ends.
But, that she may be certain not to
have heard
All vainly, I will speak what she en-
dured
Ere coming hither, and invoke the
past
To prove my prescience true. And
so—to leave
A multitude of words, and pass at
once
To the subject of thy course—when
thou hadst gone
To those Molossian plains which
sweep around
Dodona shouldering Heaven, where-
by the fane
Of Zeus Thesprian keepeth oracle,
And, wonder past belief, where oaks
do wave
Articulate adjurations—(ay, the same
Saluted thee in no perplexèd phrase,
But clear with glory, noble wife of
Zeus
That shouldst be, there some sweet-
ness took thy sense!)
Thou didst rush further onward,
stung along
The ocean-shore, toward Rhea's
mighty bay,
And, lost back from it, wast lost to it
again
In stormy evolution: and know well,
In coming time that hollow of the sea
Shall bear the name Ionian, and pre-
sent
A monument of Io's passage through,
Unto all mortals. Be these words the
signs
Of my soul's power to look beyond
the veil
Of visible things. The rest to you
and her
I will declare in common audience,
nymphs,
Returning thither where my speech
brake off.
There is a town, Canobus, built upon
The earth's fair margin, at the mouth
of Nile,
And on the mound washed up by it:
Lo, there
Shall Zeus give back to thee thy per-
fect mind,
And only by the pressure and the
touch
Of a hand not terrible; and thou to
Zeus
Shalt bear a dusky son who shall be
called
Thence Epaphus, *Touched*. That son
shall pluck the fruit
Of all that land wide-watered by the
flow
Of Nile; but after him, when counting
out
As far as the fifth full generation,
then
Full fifty maidens, a fair woman-race,
Shall back to Argos turn reluctantly,
To fly the proffered nuptials of their
kin,
Their father's brothers. These being
passion-struck,
Like falcons bearing hard on flying
doves,
Shall follow hunting at a quarry of
love
They should not hunt; till envious
Heaven maintain

A curse betwixt that beauty and their desire,
And Greece receive them, to be overcome
In murtherous woman-war by fierce red hands
Kept savage by the night. For every wife
Shall slay a husband, dyeing deep in blood.
The sword of a double edge—(I wish indeed
As fair a marriage-joy to all my foes!)
One bride alone shall fail to smite to death
The head upon her pillow, touched with love,
Made impotent of purpose, and impelled
To choose the lesser evil,—shame on her cheeks,
Than blood-guilt on her hands; which bride shall bear
A royal race in Argos. Tedious speech
Were needed to relate particulars
Of these things; 'tis enough that from her seed
Shall spring the strong He, famous with the bow,
Whose arm shall break my fetters off.
Behold,
My mother Themis, that old Titaness,
Delivered to me such an oracle;
But how and when, I should be long to speak,
And thou, in hearing, wouldst not gain at all.

Io. Elelen, elelen!
How the spasms and the pain,
And the fire on the brain,
Strike, burning me through!
How the sting of the curse, all afflue
as it flew,
Pricks me onward again!
How my heart in its terror is spurning
my breast,
And my eyes like the wheels of a chariot roll round!
I am whirled from my course, to the east, to the west,
In the whirlwind of frenzy all madly inwound;
And my mouth is unbridled for anguish and hate,
And my words beat in vain, in wild storms of unrest,
On the sea of my desolate fate.

[Io rushes out.]

Chorus, — strophe.

Oh, wise was he, oh, wise was he,
Who first within his spirit knew,
And with his tongue declared it true,
That love comes best that comes unto
The equal of degree!
And that the poor and that the low
Should seek no love from those above,
Whose souls are fluttered with the flow

Of airs about their golden height,
Or proud because they see arow
Ancestral crowns of light.

Antistrophe.

Oh, never, never, may ye, Fates,
Behold me with your awful eyes
Lift mine too fondly up the skies
Where Zeus upon the purple waits!
Nor let me step too near, too near,
To any suitor bright from heaven;
Because I see, because I fear,
This loveless maiden vexed and laden
By this fell curse of Heré, driven
On wanderings dread and drear.

Epoche.

Nay, grant an equal troth instead
Of nuptial love, to bind me by!
It will not hurt, I shall not dread
To meet it in reply.
But let not love from those above
Revert and fix me, as I said,
With that inevitable Eye!
I have no sword to fight that fight,
I have no strength to tread that path,
I know not if my nature hath
The power to bear, I cannot see
Whither from Zeus's infinite
I have the power to flee.

Prometheus. Yet Zeus, albeit most absolute of will,
Shall turn to meekness,—such a marriage-rite
He holds in preparation, which anon
Shall thrust him headlong from his gerent seat
Adown the abyssmal void; and so the curse
His father Chronos muttered in his fall.
As he fell from his ancient throne and cursed,
Shall be accomplished wholly. No escape
From all that ruin shall the filial Zeus

Find granted to him from any of his gods,
Unless I teach him. I the refuge know,
And I, the means. Now, therefore, let him sit
And brave the imminent doom, and fix his faith
On his supernal noises hurtling on
With restless hand the bolt that breathes out fire;
For these things shall not help him, none of them,
Nor hinder his perdition when he falls
To shame, and lower than patience:
such a foe
He doth himself prepare against himself,
A wonder of unconquerable hate,
An organizer of sublimer fire
Than glares in lightnings, and of grander sound
Than aught the thunder rolls, out-thundering it,
With power to shatter in Poseidon's fist
The trident-spear, which, while it plagues the sea,
Doth shake the shores around it.
Ay, and Zeus,
Precipitated thus, shall learn at length
The difference betwixt rule and servitude.

Chorus. Thou makest threats for Zeus of thy desires.

Prometheus. I tell you all these things shall be fulfilled
Even so as I desire them.

Chorus. Must we, then, look out for one shall come to master Zeus?

Prometheus. These chains weigh lighter than his sorrows shall.

Chorus. How art thou not afraid to utter such words?

Prometheus. What should I fear, who cannot die?

Chorus. But he can visit thee with dreader woe than death's.

Prometheus. Why, let him do it! I am here, prepared

For all things and their pangs.

Chorus. The wise are they who reverence Adrasteia.

Prometheus. Reverence thou, Adore thou, flatter thou, whomever reigns,

Whenever reigning! But for me, your Zeus
Is less than nothing. Let him act and reign
His brief hour out according to his will:
He will not, therefore, rule the gods too long.
But lo! I see that courier-god of Zeus,
That new-made menial of the new-crowned king:
He, doubtless, comes to announce to us something new.

HERMES enters.

Hermes. I speak to thee, the sophist, the talker-down
Of scorn by scorn, the sinner against gods,
The reverencer of men, the thief of fire,—
I speak to thee and adjure thee: Zeus requires
Thy declaration of what marriage-rite
Thus moves thy vaunt, and shall hereafter cause
His fall from empire. Do not wrap thy speech
In riddles, but speak clearly. Never cast
Ambiguous paths, Prometheus, for my feet,
Since Zeus, thou mayst perceive, is scarcely won
To mercy by such means.

Prometheus. A speech well-mouthed
In the utterance, and full-minded in the sense,
As doth befit a servant of the gods!
New gods, ye newly reign, and think, forsooth,
Ye dwell in towers too high for any dart
To carry a wound there! Have I not stood by
While two kings fell from thence? and shall I not
Behold the third, the same who rules you now,
Fall, shamed to sudden ruin? Do I seem
To tremble and quail before your modern gods?
Far be it from me! For thyself, depart;
Re-tread thy steps in haste. To all thou hast asked
I answer nothing.

Hermes. Such a wind of pride
Impelled thee of yore full sail upon
these rocks.

Prometheus. I would not barter —
learn thou soothly that! —
My suffering for thy service. I main-
tain
It is a nobler thing to serve these
rocks
Than live a faithful slave to father
Zeus.
Thus upon scorers I retort their
scorn.

Hermes. It seems that thou dost
glory in thy despair.

Prometheus. I glory? Would my
foes did glory so,
And I stood by to see them! — naming
whom,
Thou art not unremembered.

Hermes. Dost thou charge
Me also with the blame of thy mis-
chance?

Prometheus. I tell thee I loathe the
universal gods,
Who, for the good I gave them, ren-
dered back
The ill of their injustice.

Hermes. Thou art mad,
Thou art raving, Titan, at the fever-
height.

Prometheus. If it be madness to
abhor my foes,
May I be mad!

Hermes. If thou wert prosperous,
Thou wouldest be unendurable.

Prometheus. Alas!

Hermes. Zeus knows not that
word.

Prometheus. But maturing Time
Teaches all things.

Hermes. Howbeit, thou hast not
learnt

The wisdom yet, thou needest.

Prometheus. If I had,
I should not talk thus with a slave
like thee.

Hermes. No answer thou vouch-
safest, I believe,
To the great Sire's requirement.

Prometheus. Verily
I owe him grateful service, and should
pay it.

Hermes. Why, thou dost mock me,
Titan, as I stood

A child before thy face.

Prometheus. No child, forsooth,
But yet more foolish than a foolish
child,

If thou expect that I should answer
aught

Thy Zeus can ask. No torture from
his hand,
Nor any machination in the world,
Shall force mine utterance ere he
loose, himself,

These cankerous fetters from me.
For the rest,

Let him now hurl his blanching light-
nings down,
And with his white-winged snows,
and mutterings deep

Of subterranean thunders, mix all
things,

Confound them in disorder. None of
this
Shall bend my sturdy will, and make
me speak

The name of his dethroner who shall
come.

Hermes. Can this avail thee? Look
to it!

Prometheus. Long ago
It was looked forward to, precoun-
selled of.

Hermes. Vain god, take righteous
courage! Dare for once
To apprehend and front thine agonies
With a just prudence.

Prometheus. Vainly dost thou chafe
My soul with exhortation, as yonder
sea

Goes beating on the rock. Oh! think
no more

That I, fear-struck by Zeus to a wo-
man's mind,
Will supplicate him, loathed as he is,
With feminine upliftings of my hands,
To break these chains. Far from me
be the thought!

Hermes. I have indeed, methinks,
said much in vain,

For still thy heart beneath my show-
ers of prayers

Lies dry and hard, nay, leaps like a
young horse

Who bites against the new bit in his
teeth,

And tugs and struggles against the
new-tried rein,

Still fiercest in the feeblest thing of
all,

Which sophism is; since absolute will
disjoined

From perfect mind is worse than
weak. Behold,

Unless my words persuade thee, what
a blast

And whirlwind of inevitable woe
Must sweep persuasion through thee!
For at first
The Father will split up this jut of rock
With the great thunder and the bolted flame,
And hide thy body where a hinge of stone
Shall catch it like an arm; and, when thou hast passed
A long black time within, thou shalt come out
To front the sun while Zeus's winged hound,
The strong, carnivorous eagle, shall wheel down
To meet thee, self-called to a daily feast,
And set his fierce beak in thee, and tear off
The long rags of thy flesh, and batten deep
Upon thy dusky liver. Do not look
For any end, moreover, to this curse,
Or ere some god appear to accept thy pangs
On his own head vicarious, and de-
scend
With unreluctant step the darks of hell
And gloomy abysses around Tartarus.
Then ponder this,—this threat is not a growth
Of vain invention; it is spoken and meant:
King Zeus's mouth is impotent to lie,
Consummating the utterance by the act.
So, look to it, thou! take heed, and nevermore
Forget good counsel to indulge self-will.
Chorus. Our Hermes suits his reasons to the times,
At least I think so, since he bids thee drop
Self-will for prudent counsel. Yield to him!
When the wise err, their wisdom makes their shame.
Prometheus. Unto me the fore-
knower, this mandate of power
He cries, to reveal it.
What's strange in my fate, if I suffer from hate
At the hour that I feel it?
Let the locks of the lightning, all
bristling and whitening,

Flash, coiling me round,
While the ether goes surging 'neath
thunder and scourging
Of wild winds unbound!
Let the blast of the firmament whirl
from its place
The earth rooted below,
And the brine of the ocean, in rapid emotion,
Be driven in the face
Of the stars up in heaven, as they walk to and fro!
Let him hurl me anon into Tartarus
—on—
To the blackest degree,
With Necessity's vortices strangling me down;
But he cannot join death to a fate
meant for me!
Hermes. Why, the words that he speaks and the thoughts that he thinks
Are maniacal! — add,
If the Fate who hath bound him
should loose not the links,
He were utterly mad.
Then depart ye who groan with him,
Leaving to moan with him;
Go in haste! lest the roar of the thunder aneering
Should blast you to idiocy, living and hearing.
Chorus. Change thy speech for another, thy thought for a new;
If to move me and teach me indeed be thy care;
For thy words swerve so far from the loyal and true
That the thunder of Zeus seems more easy to bear.
How! couldst teach me to venture such violence? behold!
I choose with this victim this anguish foretold!
I recoil from the traitor in haste and disdain,
And I know that the curse of the treason is worse
Than the pang of the chain.
Hermes. Then remember, O nymphs, what I tell you before,
Nor, when pierced by the arrows that Até will throw you,
Cast blame on your fate, and declare evermore
That Zeus thrust you on anguish he did not foreshow you.
Nay, verily, may I for ye perish anon

For your deed, by your choice. By
no blindness of doubt,
No abruptness of doom, but by mad-
ness alone,
In the great net of Até, whence
none cometh out,
Ye are wound and undone.
Prometheus. Ay! in act now, in
word now no more,
Earth is rocking in space.
And the thunders crash up with a
roar upon roar,
And the eddying lightnings flash
fire in my face,
And the whirlwinds are whirling the
dust round and round,

And the blasts of the winds univer-
sal leap free,
And blow each upon each with a pas-
sion of sound,
And ether goes mingling in storm
with the sea.
Such a curse on my head, in a mani-
fest dread,
From the hand of your Zeus has
been hurtled along.
Oh my mother's fair glory! O Ether,
enbring
All eyes with the sweet common
light of thy bringing!
Dost see how I suffer this
wrong?

A LAMENT FOR ADONIS.

FROM THE GREEK OF BION.

I.

I mourn for Adonis—Adonis is dead,
Fair Adonis is dead, and the Loves
are lamenting.
Sleep, Cypris, no more on thy purple-
strewed bed;
Arise, wretch stoled in black, beat
thy breast unrelenting,
And shriek to the worlds, “Fair
Adonis is dead.”

II.

I mourn for Adonis—the Loves are
lamenting.
He lies on the hills in his beauty
and death;
The white tusk of a boar has trans-
pierced his white thigh.
Cytherea grows mad at his thin,
gasping breath,
While the black blood drips down on
the pale ivory,
And his eyeballs lie quenched with
the weight of his brows;
The rose fades from his lips, and upon
them just parted
The kiss dies the goddess consents
not to lose,

Though the kiss of the dead cannot
make her glad-hearted:
He knows not who kisses him dead
in the dews.

III.

I mourn for Adonis—the Loves are
lamenting.
Deep, deep, in the thigh is Adonis's
wound;
But a deeper, is Cypris's bosom pre-
senting.
The youth lieth dead while his dogs
howl around,
And the nymphs weep aloud from
the mists of the hill,
And the poor Aphrodité, with
tresses unbound,
All dishevelled, unsandalled, shrieks
mournful and shrill
Through the dusk of the groves.
The thorns, tearing her feet,
Gather up the red flower of her blood
which is holy,
Each footstep she takes; and the
valleys repeat
The sharp cry she utters, and draw it
out slowly.

She calls on her spouse, her Assyrian, on him
Her own youth, while the dark blood
spreads over his body,
The chest taking hue from the gash
in the limb,
And the bosom once ivory turning to
ruddy.

iv.

Ah, ah, Cytherea! the Loves are lamenting.
She lost her fair spouse, and so lost
her fair smile:
When he lived she was fair, by the
whole world's consenting,
Whose fairness is dead with him: woe worth the while!
All the mountains above, and the bakklands below,
Murmur, ah, ah, Adonis! the streams overflow
Aphrodite's deep wail; river-fountains
in pity
Weep soft in the hills; and the flowers as they blow
Redden outward with sorrow, while
all hear her go
With the song of her sadness through
mountain and city.

v.

Ah, ah, Cytherea! Adonis is dead.
Fair Adonis is dead—Echo answers Adonis!
Who weeps not for Cypris, when bowing her head
She stares at the wound where it
gapes and astounds?
—When, ah, ah!—she saw how the
blood ran away
And empurpled the thigh, and, with
wild hands flung out,
Said with sobs, “Stay, Adonis! unhappy one, stay,
Let me feel thee once more, let me
ring thee about
With the clasp of my arms, and press
kiss into kiss!”
Wait a little, Adonis, and kiss me
again,
For the last time, beloved; and but so
much of this
That the kiss may learn life from the
warmth of the strain!
—Till thy breath shall exude from thy
soul to my mouth,

To my heart, and, the love-charm I
once more receiving,
May drink thy love in it, and keep of
a truth
That one kiss in the place of Adonis
the living.
Thou fliest me, mournful one, fliest
me far,
My Adonis, and seekest the Acheron
portal,
To Hell's cruel King goest down with
a scar,
While I weep and live on like a
wretched immortal,
And follow no step! O Persephoné,
take him,
My husband! thou'rt better and
brighter than I,
So all beauty flows down to thee: I
cannot make him
Look up at my grief: there's despair
in my cry,
Since I wail for Adonis who died to
me—died to me—
Then, I fear thee! Art thou dead,
my Adored?
Passion ends like a dream in the sleep
that's denied to me,
Cypris is widowed, the Loves seek
their lord
All the house through in vain. Charm
of cestus has ceased
With thy clasp! O too bold in the
hunt past preventing,
Ay, mad, thou so fair, to have strife
with a beast!”
Thus the goddess wailed on; and
the Loves are lamenting.

vi.

Ah, ah, Cytherea! Adonis is dead.
She wept tear after tear with the blood
which was shed,
And both turned into flowers for the
earth's garden-close,—
Her tear, to the wind-flower; his
blood to the rose.

vii.

I mourn for Adonis—Adonis is dead.
Weep no more in the woods, Cytherea, thy lover!
So, well: make a place for his corse in
thy bed,
With the purples thou sleepest in,
under and over.

He's fair, though a corse,—a fair corse,
like a sleeper.
Lay him soft in the silks he had
pleasure to fold
When, beside thee at night, holy
dreams deep and deeper
Enclosed his young life on the couch
made of gold.
Love him still, poor Adonis; cast on
him together
The crowns and the flowers: since
he died from the place,
Why, let all die with him; let the
blossoms go wither;
Rain myrtles and olive-buds down
on his face.
Rain the myrrh down, let all that is
best fall a-pining
Since the myrrh of his life from thy
keeping is swept
Pale he lay, thine Adonis, in purples
reclining:
The Loves raised their voices around
him and wept.
They have shorn their bright curls off
to cast on Adonis:
One treads on his bow; on his arrows,
another;
One breaks up a well-feathered quiv-
er; and one is
Bent low at a sandal, untying the
strings;
And one carries the vases of gold
from the springs,

While one washes the wound, and be-
hind them a brother
Fans down on the body sweet air
with his wings.

VIII.

Cytherea herself now the Loves are
lamenting,
Each torch at the door Hymenæus
blew out;
And, the marriage-wreath dropping
its leaves as repenting,
No more "Hymen, Hymen," is
chanted about;
But the *ai ai* instead — "ai alas" is
begun
For Adonis, and then follows "ai
Hymenæus!"
The Graces are weeping for Cinyris'
son,
Sobbing low, each to each "His fair
eyes cannot see us!"
Their wail strikes more shrill than the
sadder Dioné's.
The Fates mourn aloud for Adonis,
Adonis,
Deep chanting; he hears not a word
that they say:
He *would* hear, but Persephoné has
him in keeping.
—Cease moan, Cytherea! leave pomps
for to-day,
And weep new when a new year re-
fits thee for weeping.

A VISION OF POETS.

O sacred Essence, lighting me this hour,
How may I lightly stile thy great
power?
Echo. Power.
Power! but of whence? under the green-
wood spraye?
Or liv'st in Heaven? saye.
Echo. In Heavens aye.

In Heavens aye! tell, may I it obtayne *
By alms, by fasting, prayer, — by paine?
Echo. By paine.
Show me the paine, it shall be under-
gone:
I to mine end will still go on.
Echo. Go on.
BRITANNIA'S PASTORALS.

A POET could not sleep aright,
For his soul kept up too much
light
Under his eyelids for the night.

And thus he rose disquieted,
With sweet rhymes ringing through
his head,
And in the forest wanderèd,

Where, sloping up the darkest glades,
The moon had drawn long colonnades
Upon whose floor the verdure fades

To a faint silver, pavement fair
The antique wood-nymphs scarce
would dare
To footprint o'er, had such been there,

And rather sit by breathlessly,
With fear in their large eyes, to see
The consecrated sight. But me

The poet, who, with spirit-kiss
Familiar, had long claimed for his
Whatever earthly beauty is,

Who also in his spirit bore
A beauty passing the earth's store,
Walked calmly onward evermore.

His aimless thoughts in metre went
Like a babe's hand, without intent,
Drawn down a seven-stringed instru-
ment;

Nor jarred it with his humor as,
With a faint stirring of the grass,
An apparition fair did pass.

He might have feared another time;
But all things fair and strange did
chime
With his thoughts then, as rhyme to
rhyme.

An angel had not startled him,
Alighted from heaven's burning rim
To breathe from glory in the Dism;

Much less a lady riding slow
Upon a palfrey white as snow,
And smooth as a snow-cloud could go.

Full upon his she turned her face:
"What ho, sir poet! dost thou pace
Our woods at night in ghostly chase

"Of some fair dryad of old tales,
Who chants between the nightingales
And over sleep by song prevails?"

She smiled; but he could see arise
Her soul from far adown her eyes,
Prepared as if for sacrifice.

She looked a queen who seemeth gay
From royal grace alone. "Now, nay,"
He answered, "slumber passed away

"Compelled by instincts in my head
That I should see to-night, instead
Of a fair nymph, some fairer Dread."

She looked up quickly to the sky
And spake: "The moon's regality
Will hear no praise; she is as I.

"She is in heaven, and I on earth;
This is my kingdom: I come forth
To crown all poets to their worth."

He brake in with a voice that
mourned:
"To their worth, lady? They are
scorned
By men they sing for, till inurned.

"To their worth? Beauty in the
mind
Leaves the hearth cold, and love-re-
fined
Ambitions make the world unkind.

"The boor who ploughs the daisy
down,
The chief whose mortgage of renown
Fixed upon graves has bought a
crown—

"Both these are happier, more ap-
proved,
Than poets! — why should I be moved
In saying both are more beloved?"

"The south can judge not of the
north,"
She resumed calmly: "I come forth
To crown all poets to their worth.

"Yea, verily, to anoint them all
With blessed oils, which surely shall
Smell sweeter as the ages fall."

"As sweet," the poet said, and rung
A low sad laugh, "as flowers are,
sprung
Out of their graves when they die
young;

"As sweet as window-eglantine,
Some bough of which, as they de-
cline,
The hired nurse gathers at their sign;

"As sweet, in short, as perfumed
shroud
Which the gay Roman maidens sewed
For English Keats, singing aloud."

The lady answered, "Yea, as sweet!
The things thou namest being complete
In fragrance, as I measure it.

" Since sweet the death-clothes and
the knell
Of him who, having lived, dies well;
And wholly sweet the asphodel

" Stirred softly by that foot of his,
When he treads brave on all that is,
Into the world of souls, from this.

" Since sweet the tears dropped at
the door
Of fearless death, and even before—
Sweet, consecrated evermore.

" What, dost thou judge it a strange
thing
That poets, crowned for vanquishing,
Should bear some dust from out the
ring?

" Come on with me, come on with me,
And learn in coming; let me free
Thy spirit into verity."

She ceased: her palfrey's paces sent
No separate noises as she went:
'Twas a bee's hum, a little spent.

And, while the poet seemed to tread
Along the drowsy noise so made,
The forest heaved up overhead

Its billowy foliage through the air,
And the calm stars did far and spare
O'erswin the masses everywhere,

Save when the overtopping pines
Did bar their tremulous light with
lines
All fixed and black. Now the moon
shines

A broader glory. You may see
The trees grow rarer presently;
The air blows up more fresh and free:

Until they come from dark to light,
And from the forest to the sight
Of the large heaven-heart, bare with
night,

A fiery throb in every star,
Those burning arteries that are
The conduits of God's life afar.

A wild brown moorland underneath,
And four pools breaking up the heath
With white low gleamings blank as
death.

Beside the first pool, near the wood,
A dead tree in set horror stood,
Pealed and disjointed, stark as rood;

Since thunder-stricken years ago,
Fixed in the spectral strain and thro'e
Wherewith it struggled from the
blow:

A monumental tree, alone,
That will not bend in storms, nor
groan,
But break off sudden like a stone.

Its lifeless shadow lies oblique
Upon the pool where, javelin-like,
The star-rays quiver while they strike.

" Drink," said the lady, very still:
" Be holy and cold." He did her
will,
And drank the starry water chill.

The next pool they came near unto
Was bare of trees; there, only grew
Straight flags, and lilies just a few,

Which sullen on the water sate,
And leant their faces on the flat,
As weary of the starlight-state.

" Drink," said the lady, grave and
slow:
" World's use behoooveth thee to
know."
He drank the bitter wave below.

The third pool, girt with thorny
bushes,
And flaunting weeds and reeds and
rushes
That winds sang through in mournful
gushes,

Was whitely smeared in many a
round
By a slow slime: the starlight swound
Over the ghastly light it found.

" Drink," said the lady, sad and
slow:
" World's love behoooveth thee to
know."
He looked to her commanding so;

Her brow was troubled; but her eye
Struck clear to his soul. For all
 reply

He drank the water suddenly,

Then, with a deathly sickness, passed
Beside the fourth pool and the last,
Where weights of shadow were down-
 cast

From yew and alder, and rank trails
Of nightshade clasping the trunk-
 scales,
And flung across the intervals

From yew to yew: who dares to stoop
Where those dank branches over-
 droop,
Into his heart the chill strikes up;

He hears a silent gliding coil,
The snakes strain hard against the
 soil,
His foot slips in their slimy oil,

And toads seem crawling on his hand,
And clinging bats, but dimly scanned,
Full in his face their wings expand.

A paleness took the poet's cheek:
"Must I drink *here?*" he seemed to
 seek
The lady's will with utterance meek:

"Ay, ay," she said, "it so must be;"
(And this time she spake cheerfully)
"Behooves thee know *world's cruelty.*"

He bowed his forehead till his mouth
Curved in the wave, and drank un-
 loath

As if from rivers of the south;

His lips sobbed through the water
 rank,
His heart paused in him while he
 drank,

His brain beat heart-like, rose and
 sank,

And he swooned backward to a dream
Wherein he lay 'twixt gloom and
 gleam,
With death and life at each extreme:

And spiritual thunders, born of soul,
Not cloud, did leap from mystic pole,
And o'er him roll and counter-roll, *

Crushing their echoes reboant
With their own wheels. Did Heaven
 so grant
His spirit a sign of covenant?

At last came silence. A slow kiss
Did crown his forehead after this;
His eyelids flew back for the bliss.

The lady stood beside his head,
Smiling a thought with hair disspread:
The moonshine seemed dishevelled

In her sleek tresses manifold,
Like Danae's in the rain of old
That dripped with melancholy gold:

But SHE was holy, pale and high
As one who saw an ecstasy
Beyond a foretold agony.

"Rise up!" said she with voice where
 song
Eddied through speech, — "rise up, be
 strong;
And learn how right avenges wrong."

The poet rose up on his feet:
He stood before an altar set
For sacrament with vessels meet,

And mystic altar-lights, which shine
As if their flames were crystal-
line
Carved flames that would not shrink
or pine.

The altar filled the central place
Of a great church, and toward its
 face
Long aisles did shoot and interlace,

And from it a continuous mist
Of incense (round the edges kissed
By a yellow light of amethyst)

Wound upward slowly and thro-
 bingly,
Cloud within cloud, right silvery,
Cloud above cloud, victoriously,—

Broke full against the archèd roof,
And thence refracting eddied off,
And floated through the marble woot

Of many a fine-wrought architrave,
Then, poised its white masses brave,
Swept solemnly down aisle and
 nave,

Where now in dark, and now in light,
The countless columns, glimmering
white,
Seemed leading out to the Infinite:

Plunged halfway up the shaft they
showed,
In that pale shifting incense-cloud
Which flowed them by, and over-
flowed,

Till mist and marble seemed to blend
And the whole temple at the end,
With its own incense to distend,—

The arches like a giant's bow
To bend and slacken; and, below,
The nichèd saints to come and go:

Alone amid the shifting scene
That central altar stood serene
In its clear, steadfast taper-sheen.

Then first the poet was aware
Of a chief angel standing there
Before that altar, in the glare.

His eyes were dreadful, for you saw
That *they* saw God; his lips and jaw,
Grand-made and strong, as Sinai's law

They could enunciate, and refrain
From vibratory after-pain;
And his brow's height was sovereign:

On the vast background of his wings
Rises his image, and he flings
From each plumed arc pale glitterings

And fiery flakes (as beateth more
Or less the angel-heart) before
And round him upon roof and floor,

Edging with fire the shifting fumes;
While at his side, 'twixt lights and
glooms,
The phantasm of an organ booms.

Extending from which instrument
And angel, right and left way bent,
The poet's sight grew sentient

Of a strange company around
And toward the altar; pale and bound,
With bay above the eyes profound.

Deathful their faces were, and yet
The power of life was in them set,
Never forgot, nor to forget:

Sublime significance of mouth,
Dilated nostril full of youth,
And forehead royal with the truth.

These faces were not multiplied
Beyond your count, but, side by side,
Did front the altar, glorified,

Still as a vision, yet exprest
Full as an action,—look and geste
Of buried saint in risen rest.

The poet knew them. Faint and dim
His spirits seemed to sink in him;
Then, like a dolphin, change, and
swim

The current: these were poets true,
Who died for Beauty, as martyrs do
For Truth; the ends being scarcely
two.

God's prophets of the Beautiful
These poets were; of iron rule,
The rugged clix, serge of wool.

Here Homer, with the broad suspense
Of thunderous brows, and lips intense
Of garrulous god-innocence.

There Shakspere, on whose forehead
climb
The crowns o' the world: O eyes sub-
lime
With tears and laughter for all time!

Here Aeschylus, the women swooned
To see so awful when he frowned
As the gods did: he standeth crowned.

Euripides, with close and mild
Scholastic lips, that could be wild,
And laugh or sob out like a child,

Even in the classes. Sophocles,
With that king's look which down the
trees
Followed the dark effigies

Of the lost Theban. Hesiod old,
Who, somewhat blind and deaf and
cold,
Cared most for gods and bulls. And
bold

Electric Pindar, quick as fear,
With race-dust on his cheeks, and
clear,
Slant, startled eyes that seem to hear

The chariot rounding the last goal,
To hurtle past it in his soul.
And Sappho, with that gloriolé

Of ebon hair on calmed brows—
O poet-woman! none foregoes
The leap, attaining the repose.

Theocritus, with glittering locks
Dropt sideway, as betwixt the rocks
He watched the visionary flocks.

And Aristophanes, who took
The world with mirth, and laughter-struck
The hollow caves of Thought, and woke

The infinite echoes hid in each.
And Virgil: shade of Mantuan beech
Did help the shade of bay to reach

And knit around his forehead high;
For his gods wore less majesty
Than his brown bees hummed deathlessly.

Lucretius, nobler than his mood,
Who dropped his plummet down the broad,
Deep universe, and said "No God,"

Finding no bottom: he denied
Divinely the divine, and died
Chief poet on the Tiber-side

By grace of God: his face is stern
As one compelled, in spite of scorn,
To teach a truth he would not learn.

And Ossian, dimly seen or guessed;
Once counted greater than the rest,
When mountain-winds blew out his vest.

And Spenser drooped his dreaming head
(With languid sleep-smile, you had said,
From his own verse engendered)

On Ariosto's, till they ran
Their curls in one: the Italian
Shot nimbler heat of bolder man

From his fine lids. And Dante,
stern
And sweet, whose spirit was an urn
For wine and milk poured out in turn.

Hard-souled Alfieri: and fancy-willed
Boiardo, who with laughter filled
The pauses of the jostled shield.

And Berni, with a hand stretched out
To sleek that storm. And, not without
The wreath he died in, and the doubt

He died by, Tasso, bard and lover,
Whose visions were too thin to cover
The face of a false woman over.

And soft Racine; and grave Corneille,
The orator of rhymes, whose wail
Scarce shook his purple. And Petrarch pale,

From whose brain-lighted heart were thrown
A thousand thoughts beneath the sun,
Each lucid with the name of One.

And Camoens, with that look he had,
Compelling India's Genius sad
From the wave through the Lusiad;

The murmurs of the storm-cape ocean
Indrawn in vibrative emotion
Along the verse. And, while devotion

In his wild eyes fantastic shone
Under the tonsure blown upon
By airs celestial, Calderon.

And bold De Vega, who breathed quick
Verse after verse, till death's old trick
Put pause to life and rhetoric.

And Goethe, with that reaching eye
His soul reached out from, far and high,
And fell from inner entity.

And Schiller, with heroic front
Worthy of Plutarch's kiss upon't,—
Too large for wreath of modern wont.

And Chaucer, with his infantine
Familiar clasp of things divine:
That mark upon his lip is wine.

Here Milton's eyes strike piercing-dim:
The shapes of suns and stars did swim
Like clouds from them, and granted him

God for sole vision. Cowley, there,
Whose active fancy debonair
Drew straws like amber — foul to fair.

Drayton and Browne, with smiles
they drew
From outward nature, still kept new
From their own inward nature true.

And Marlowe, Webster, Fletcher,
Ben,
Whose fire-hearts sowed our furrows
when
The world was worthy of such men.

And Burns, with pungent passionings
Set in his eyes: deep lyric springs
Are of the fire-mount's issuings.

And Shelley, in his white ideal,
All statue-blind. And Keats, the real
Adonis with the hymeneal

Fresh vernal buds half sunk between
His youthful curls, kissed straight
and sheen
In his Rome-grave by Venus queen.

And poor, proud Byron, sad as grave,
And salt as life; forlornly brave,
And quivering with the dart he drove.

And visionary Coleridge, who
Did sweep his thoughts as angels do
Their wings with cadence up the Blue.

These poets faced (and many more)
The lighted altar looming o'er
The clouds of incense dim and hoar;

And all their faces, in the lull
Of natural things, looked wonderful
With life and death and deathless
rule.

All, still as stone, and yet intense,
As if by spirit's vehemence
That stone were carved, and not by
sense.

But where the heart of each should
beat,
There seemed a wound instead of it,
From whence the blood dropped to
their feet

Drop after drop, — dropped heavily
As century follows century
Into the deep eternity.

Then said the lady, — and her word
Came distant, as wide waves were
stirred
Between her and the ear that heard, —

“ *World's use is cold; world's love is
vain;
World's cruelty is bitter bane:*
But pain is not the fruit of pain.

“ Harken, O poet, whom I led
From the dark wood! dismissing
dread,
Now hear this angel in my stead.

“ His organ's clavier strikes along
These poets' hearts, sonorous, strong,
They gave him without count of
wrong, —

“ A diapason whence to guide
Up to God's feet, from these who
died,
An anthem fully glorified,

“ Whereat God's blessing, IBARAK
(יִבְרָק)
Breathes back this music, folds it
back
About the earth in vapory rack,

“ And men walk in it, crying,
‘ Lo
The world is wider, and we know
The very heavens look brighter
so;

“ “ The stars move statelier round the
edge
Of the silver spheres, and give in
pledge
Their light for nobler privilege;

“ “ No little flower but joys or grieves;
Full life is rustling in the sheaves;
Full spirit sweeps the forest-leaves.’

“ So works this music on the earth;
God so admits it, sends it forth
To add another worth to worth, —

“ A new creation-bloom, that rounds
The old creation, and expounds
His Beautiful in tuneful sounds.

“ Now harken!” Then the poet
gazed
Upon the angel, glorious-faced,
Whose hand, majestically raised,

Floated across the organ-keys,
Like a pale moon o'er murmuring seas,
With no touch but with influences:

Then rose and fell (with swell and
swoon)
Of shapeless noises wandering round
A concord which at last they found)

Those mystic keys: the tones were
mixt,
Dim, faint, and thrilled and throbbed
betwixt
The incomplete and the unfixed;

And therein mighty minds were
heard
In mighty usings, only stirred,
And struggling outward for a word,

Until these surges, having run
This way and that, gave out as one
An Aphroditié of sweet tune,

A harmony, that, finding vent,
Upward in grand ascension went,
Winged to a heavenly argument,—

Up, upward like a saint who strips
The shroud back from his eyes and
lips,
And rises in apocalypse;

A harmony sublime and plain,
Which cleft (as flying swan, the rain,
Throwing the drops off with a strain

Of her white wing) those undertones
Of perplext chords, and soared at
once,
And struck out from the starry
thrones

Their several silver octaves as
It passed to God. The music was
Of divine stature, strong to pass;

And those who heard it understood
Something of life in spirit and blood,
Something of Nature's fair and good.

And while it sounded, those great
souls
Did thrill as racers at the goals,
And burn in all their aureoles:

But she the lady, as vapor-bound,
Stood calmly in the joy of sound,
Like Nature, with the showers around;

And when it ceased, the blood which
fell

Again, alone grew audible,
Tolling the silence as a bell.

The sovran angel lifted high
His hand, and spake out sovranly:
" Tried poets, hearken and reply!

" Give me true answers. If we
grant

That not to suffer is to want
The conscience of the jubilant;

" If ignorance of anguish is
But ignorance, and mortals miss
Fair prospects by a level bliss;

" If, as two colors must be viewed
In a visible image, mortals should
Need good and evil to see good;

" If to speak nobly comprehends
To feel profoundly; if the ends
Of power and suffering, Nature
blends;

" If poets on the tripod must
Writhe like the Pythian to make just
Their oracles, and merit trust;

" If every vatic word that sweeps
To change the world must pale their
lips,
And leave their own souls in eclipse;

" If to search deep the universe
Must pierce the searcher with the
curse,
Because that bolt (in man's reverse)

" Was shot to the heart o' the wood,
and lies
Wedged deepest in the best; if eyes
That look for visions and surprise

" From influent angels must shut
down
Their eyelids first to sun and moon,
The head asleep upon a stone;

" If ONE who did redeem you back,
By his own loss, from final wrack,
Did consecrate by touch and track

" Those temporal sorrows till the
taste
Of brackish waters of the waste
Is salt with tears he dropt too fast;

"If all the crowns of earth must wound
With prickings of the thorns he found;
If saddest sighs swell sweetest sound,—

"What say ye unto this? Refuse
This baptism in salt water? Choose
Calm breasts, mute lips, and labor loose?

"Or, O ye gifted givers! ye
Who give your liberal hearts to me
To make the world this harmony,

"Are ye resigned that they be spent
To such world's help?" The spirits bent
Their awful brows, and said, "Content."

Content! it sounded like *Amen*
Said by a choir of mourning men;
An affirmation full of pain

And patience; ay, of glorying
And adoration, as a king
Might seal an oath for governing.

Then said the angel, — and his face
Lightened abroad until the place
Grew larger for a moment's space,

The long aisles flashing out in light,
And nave and transept, columns white
And arches crossed, being clear to sight

As if the roof were off, and all
Stood in the noon-sun, — "Lo! I call

To other hearts as liberal.

"This pedal strikes out in the air:
My instrument has room to bear
Still fuller strains and perfecter,

"Herein is room, and shall be room
While time lasts, for new hearts to come
Consummating while they consume.

"What living man will bring a gift
Of his own heart, and help to lift
The tune? The race is to the swift."

So asked the angel. Straight, the while,
A company came up the aisle
With measured step and sorted smile;
Cleaving the incense-clouds that rise,
With winking, unaccustomed eyes,
And lovelocks smelling sweet of spice.

One bore his head above the rest
As if the world were dispossess'd;
And one did pillow chin on breast,
Right languid, an as he should faint;
One shook his curls across his paint,
And moralized on worldly taint;

One, slanting up his face, did wink
The salt rheum to the eyelid's briuk,
To think, O gods! or — not to think,

Some trod out stealthily and slow,
As if the sun would fall in snow
If they walked to instead of fro;

And some, with conscious ambling free,
Did shake their bells right daintily
On hand and foot, for harmony;

And some, composing sudden sighs
In attitudes of point-device,
Rehearsed impromptu agonies.

And when this company drew near
The spirits crowned, it might appear
Submitted to a ghastly fear;

As a sane eye in master-passion
Constrains a maniac to the fashion
Of hideous maniac imitation

In the least geste, — the dropping low
O' the lid, the wrinkling of the brow,
Exaggerate with mock and mow:

So mastered was that company
By the crowned vision utterly,
Swayed to a maniac mockery.

One dulled his eyeballs, as they ached
With Homer's forehead, though he lacked
An inch of any; and one racked

His lower lip with restless tooth,
As Pindar's rushing words forsooth
Were pent behind it; one his smooth

Pink cheeks did rumple passionate
Like Aeschylus, and tried to prate
On trolling tongue of fate and fate;

One set her eyes like Sappho's — or
Any light woman's; one forbore
Like Dante, or any man as poor

In mirth, to let a smile undo
His hard-shut lips; and one that drew
Sour humors from his mother blew

His sunken cheeks out to the size
Of most unnatural jollities,
Because Anacreon looked jest-wise;

So with the rest: it was a sight
A great world-laughter would requite,
Or great world-wrath, with equal right.

Out came a speaker from that crowd
To speak for all, in sleek and proud
Exordial periods, while he bowed

His knee before the angel: "Thus,
O angel who hast called for us,
We bring thee service emulous, —

"Fit service from sufficient soul,
Hand-service to receive world's dole,
Lip-service in world's ear to roll

"Adjusted concords soft enough
To hear the wine-cups passing through,
And not too grave to spoil the show:

"Thou, certes, when thou askest
more,
O sapient angel! leanest o'er
The window-sill of metaphor.

"To give our hearts up? Fie! that rage
Barbaric antedates the age:
It is not done on any stage.

"Because your scald or gleeman went
With seven or nine-stringed instrument
Upon his back, — must ours be bent?

"We are not pilgrims, by your leave;
No, nor yet martyrs: if we grieve,
It is to rhyme to — summer eve:

"And if we labor, it shall be
As suiteth best with our degree,
In after-dinner reverie."

More yet that speaker would have said,
Poising between his smiles fair-fed
Each separate phrase till finished;

But all the foreheads of those born
And dead true poets flashed with
scorn
Betwixt the bay-leaves round them worn;

Ay, jetted such brave fire, that they,
The new-come, shrank and paled away
Like leaden ashes when the day

Strikes on the hearth. A spirit-blast,
A presence known by power, at last
Took them up mutely: they had passed.

And he, our pilgrim poet, saw
Only their places in deep awe,
What time the angel's smile did draw

His gazing upward. Smiling on,
The angel in the angel shone,
Revealing glory in benison;

Till, ripened in the light which shut
The poet in, his spirit mute
Dropped sudden as a perfect fruit:

He fell before the angel's feet,
Saying, "If what is true is sweet,
In something I may compass it:

"For, where my worthiness is poor,
My will stands richly at the door
To pay shortcomings evermore.

"Accept me, therefore: not for price,
And not for pride, my sacrifice
Is tendered; for my soul is nice,

"And will beat down those dusty
seeds
Of bearded corn if she succeeds
In soaring while the covey feeds.

"I soar; I am drawn up like the lark
To its white cloud: so high my mark,
Albeit my wing is small and dark.

"I ask no wages, seek no fame:
Sew me for shroud, round face and
name,
God's banner of the oriflamme.

"I only would have leave to loose
(In tears and blood if so He choose)
Mine inward music out to use;

"I only would be spent—in pain
And loss perchance, but not in vain—
Upon the sweetness of that strain;

"Only project beyond the bound
Of mine own life, so lost and found,
My voice, and live on in its sound;

"Only embrace and be embraced
By fiery ends, whereby to waste,
And light God's future with my
past."

The angel's smile grew more divine,
The mortal speaking; ay, its shine
Swelled fuller, like a choir-note fine,

Till the broad glory round his brow
Did vibrate with the light below;
But what he said, I do not know.

Nor know I if the man who prayed
Rose up accepted, unforbade;
From the church-floor where he was
laid;

Nor if a listening life did run
Through the king-poets, one by one
Rejoicing in a worthy son:

My soul, which might have seen, grew
blind
By what it looked on: I can find
No certain count of things behind.

I saw alone, dim white and grand
As in a dream, the angel's hand
Stretched forth in gesture of command

Straight through the haze. And so,
as erst,
A strain more noble than the first
Mused in the organ, and outburst:

With giant march from floor to roof
Rose the full notes now parted off
In pauses massively aloof

Like measured thunders, now rejeined
In concords of mysterious kind
Which fused together sense and mind,

Now flashing sharp on sharp along,
Exultant in a mounting throng,
Now dying off to a low song

Fed upon minors, wavelike sounds
Re-eddyng into silver rounds,
Eulogizing liberty with bounds:

And every rhythm that seemed to
close
Survived in confluent underflows
Symphonious with the next that rose.

Thus the whole strain being multi-
plied

And greated, with its glorified
Wings shot abroad from side to side,

Waved backward (as a wind might
wave)

A Brocken mist, and with as brave
Wild roaring) arch and architrave,

Aisle, transept, column, marble wall,
Then swelling outward, prodigal
Of aspiration beyond thrall,

Soared, and drew up with it the whole
Of this said vision, as a soul
Is raised by a thought. And as a
scroll

Of bright devices is unrolled
Still upward with a gradual gold,
So rose the vision manifold,

Angel and organ, and the round
Of spirits, solemnized and crowned;
While the freed clouds of incense
wound

Ascending, following in their track,
And glimmering faintly like the rack
O' the moon in her own light cast
back.

And as that solemn dream withdrew,
The lady's kiss did fall anew
Cold on the poet's brow as dew.

And that same kiss which bound him
first

Beyond the senses, now reversed
Its own law, and most subtly pierced

His spirit with the sense of things
Sensual and present. Vanishings
Of glory with Aeolian wings

Struck him and passed: the lady's
face

Did melt back in the chrysopras
Of the orient morning sky, that was

Yet clear of lark; and there and so
She melted as a star might do,
Still smiling as she melted slow, —

Smiling so slow, he seemed to see
Her smile the last thing, gloriously
Beyond her, far as memory.

Then he looked round: he was alone.
He lay before the breaking sun,
As Jacob at the Bethel stone.

And thought's entangled skein being
wound,
He knew the moorland of his swound,
And the pale pools that smeared the
ground;

The far wood-pines like offing ships;
The fourth pool's yew anear him drips,
World's cruelty attains his lips,

And still he tastes it, bitter still:
Through all that glorious possible
He had the sight of present ill.

Yet rising calmly up and slowly,
With such a cheer as scorneth folly,
A mild, delightsome melancholy,

He journeyed homeward through the
wood,
And prayed along the solitude
Betwixt the pines, "O God, my God!"

The golden morning's open flowings
Did sway the trees to murmurous
bowings,
In metric chant of blessed poems.

And passing homeward through the
wood,
He prayed along the solitude,
"Thou, Poet-God, art great and good!"

"And though we must have, and have
had
Right reason to be earthly sad,
Thou, Poet-God, art great and glad!"

CONCLUSION.

Life treads on life, and heart on heart:
We press too close in church and mart
To keep a dream or grave apart.

And I was 'ware of walking down
That same green forest, where had gone
The poet-pilgrim. One by one

I traced his footsteps. From the east
A red and tender radiance pressed
Through the near trees, until I guessed

The sun behind shone full and round;
While up the leafiness profound
A wind scarce old enough for sound

Stood ready to blow on me when
I turned that way; and now and then
The birds sang, and brake off again

To shake their pretty feathers dry
Of the dew, sliding droppingly
From the leaf-edges, and apply

Back to their song: 'twixt dew and
bird
So sweet a silence ministered,
God seemed to use it for a word;

Yet morning souls did leap and run
In all things, as the least had won
A joyous insight of the sun,

And no one, looking round the wood,
Could help confessing as he stood,
This Poet-God is glad and good.

But hark! a distant sound that grows,
A heaving, sinking of the boughs,
A rustling murmur, not of those,

A breezy noise which is not breezel
And white-clad children by degrees
Steal out in troops among the trees, —

Fair little children morning-bright,
With faces grave, yet soft to sight,
Expressive of restrained delight.

Some plucked the palm-boughs within
reach,
And others leapt up high to catch
The upper boughs, and shake from
each

A rain of dew, till, wetted so,
The child who held the branch let go,
And it swung backward with a flow

Of faster drippings. Then I knew
The children laughed; but the laugh
flew
From its own chirrup as might do

A frightened song-bird; and a child
Who seemed the chief said very mild,
"Hush! keep this morning undefiled."

His eyes rebuked them from calm spheres;
His soul upon his brow appears
In waiting for more holy years.

I called the child to me, and said,
"What are your palms for?" — "To be spread,"
He answered, "on a poet dead.

"The poet died last month, and now
The world, which had been somewhat slow
In honoring his living brow,

"Commands the palms: they must be strown
On his new marble very soon,
In a procession of the town."

I sighed and said, "Did he foresee
Any such honor?" — "Verily
I cannot tell you," answered he.

"But this I know, I fain would lay
My own head down, another day,
As he did — with the fame away.

"A lily a friend's hand had plucked
Lay by his death-bed, which he looked
As deep down as a bee had sucked,

"Then, turning to the lattice, gazed
O'er hill and river, and upraised
His eyes illumined, and amazed

"With the world's beauty, up to God,
Re-offering on their iris broad
The images of things bestowed

"By the chief Poet. 'God,' he cried,
'Be praised for anguish which has tried,
For beauty which has satisfied;

"For this world's presence half within
And half without me, — thought and scene, —
This sense of Being and Having Been.

"I thank thee that my soul hath room
For thy grand world: both guests
may come —
Beauty, to soul; body, to tomb.

"I am content to be so weak:
Put strength into the words I speak,
And I am strong in what I seek.

"I am content to be so bare
Before the archers, everywhere
My wounds being stroked by heavenly air.

"I laid my soul before thy feet,
That images of fair and sweet
Should walk to other men on it.

"I am content to feel the step
Of each pure image: let those keep
To mandragore who care to sleep.

"I am content to touch the brink
Of the other goblet, and I think
My bitter drink a wholesome drink.

"Because my portion was assigned
Wholesome and bitter, thou art kind,
And I am blessed to my mind.

"Gifted for giving, I receive
The maythorn, and its scent outgives:
I grieve not that I once did grieve.

"In my large joy of sight and touch
Beyond what others count for such,
I am content to suffer much.

"I know — is all the mourner saith,
Knowledge by suffering entereth,
And life is perfected by death."

The child spake nobly: strange to hear,
His infantine soft accents clear,
Charged with high meanings did appear;

And, fair to see, his form and face
Winged out with whiteness and pure
grace
From the green darkness of the place.

Behind his head a palm-tree grew;
An orient beam which pierced it
through
Transversely on his forehead drew

The figure of a palm-branch brown,
Traced on its brightness up and down
In fine fair lines, — a shadow-crown:

Guido might paint his angels so, —
A little angel taught to go
With holy words to saints below, —

Such innocence of action, yet
Significance of object, met
In his whole bearing strong and sweet.

And all the children, the whole band,
Did round in rosy reverence stand,
Each with a palm-bough in his hand.

"And so he died," I whispered.
"Nay,"
Not so," the childish voice did say:
"That poet turned him first to pray

"In silence, and God heard the rest
'Twixt the sun's footsteps down the west.
Then he called one who loved him best,

"Yea, he called softly through the room
(His voice was weak, yet tender)—
"Come,"
He said, "come nearer! Let the bloom

"Of life grow over, undenied,
This bridge of death, which is not wide:
I shall be soon at the other side.

"Come, kiss me!" So the one in truth
Who loved him best, in love, not ruth,
Bowed down, and kissed him mouth to mouth:

"And in that kiss of love was won Life's manumission. All was done:
The mouth that kissed last kissed alone.

"But in the former, confluent kiss,
The same was sealed, I think, by His, To words of truth and uprightness."

The child's voice trembled, his lips shook
Like a rose leaning o'er a brook,
Which vibrates, though it is not struck.

"And who," I asked, a little moved,
Yet curious-eyed, "was this that loved
And kissed him last, as it behoved?"

"I," softly said the child; and then,
"I," said he louder, once again:
"His son, my rank is among men:

"And, now that men exalt his name,
I come to gather palms with them,
That holy love may hallow fame.

"He did not die alone, nor should His memory live so, 'mid these rude World-praises—a worse solitude.

"Me, a voice calleth to that tomb
Where these are strewing branch and bloom,
Saying, 'Come nearer:' and I come.

"Glory to God!" resumed he,
And his eyes smiled for victory
O'er their own tears which I could see

Fallen on the palm, down cheek and chin—

"That poet now has entered in
The place of rest which is not sin.

"And while he rests, his songs in troops
Walk up and down our earthly slopes,
Companionship by diviner hopes."

"But thou," I murmured to engage
The child's speech farther, "hast an age
Too tender for this orphanage."

"Glory to God—to God!" he saith,
"KNOWLEDGE BY SUFFERING ENTERETH,
AND LIFE IS PERFECTED BY DEATH."

THE POET'S VOW.

— “Oh, be wiser thou,
Instructed that true knowledge leads to love.”

WORDSWORTH.

PART THE FIRST.

SHOWING WHEREFORE THE VOW WAS MADE.

I.

EVE is a twofold mystery;
The stillness Earth doth keep,
The motion wherewith human hearts
Do each to either leap
As if all souls between the poles
Felt “Parting comes in sleep.”

II.

The rowers lift their oars to view
Each other in the sea;
The landsmen watch the rocking
boats
In a pleasant company;
While up the hill go gladlier still
Dear friends by two and three.

III.

The peasant's wife hath looked without
Her cottage-door, and smiled:
For there the peasant drops his spade
To clasp his youngest child,
Which hath no speech; but its hand
can reach
And stroke his forehead mild.

IV.

A poet sate that eventide
Within his hall alone,
As silent as its ancient lords
In the coffined place of stone,
When the bat hath shrunk from the
praying monk,
And the praying monk is gone.

V.

Nor wore the dead a stiller face
Beneath the ceremony's roll:
His lips refusing out in words

Their mystic thoughts to dole,
His steadfast eye burnt inwardly,
As burning out his soul.

VI.

You would not think that brow could
e'er
Ungentle moods express;
Yet seemed it, in this troubled world,
Too calm for gentleness,
When the very star that shines from
far
Shines trembling ne'ertheless.

VII.

It lacked, all need, the softening light
Which other brows supply:
We should conjoin the scathed trunks
Of our humanity,
That each leafless spray intwining may
Look softer 'gainst the sky.

VIII.

None gazed within the poet's face;
The poet gazed in none:
He threw a lonely shadow straight
Before the moon and sun,
Affronting Nature's heaven-dwelling
creatures
With wrong to Nature done:

IX.

Because this poet daringly
— The nature at his heart,
And that quick tune along his veins
He could not change by art —
Had vowed his blood of brotherhood
To a stagnuant place apart.

X.

He did not vow in fear, or wrath,
Or grief's fantastic whim,
But, weights and shows of sensual
things

Too closely crossing him,
On his soul's eyelid the pressure
slid,
And made its vision dim.

xli.

And darkening in the dark he strove,
'Twixt earth and sea and sky,
To lose in shadow, wave, and cloud,
His brother's haunting cry:
The winds were welcome as they
swept,
God's five-day work he would accept,
But let the rest go by.

xlii.

He cried, "O touching, patient Earth,
That weepest in thy glee,
Whom God created very good,
And very mournful, we !
Thy voice of moan doth reach his
throne,
As Abel's rose from thee.

xliii.

"Poor crystal sky with stars astray !
Mad winds that howling go
From east to west! perplexed seas
That stagger from their blow!
O motion wild ! O wave defied !
Our curse hath made you so.

xlv.

"We ! and our curse ! do I partake
The desiccating sin ?
Have I the apple at my lips ?
The money-lust within ?
Do I human stand with the wounding
hand,
To the blasting heart akin ?

xvi.

"Thou solemn pathos of all things,
For solemn joy designed !
Behold, submissive to your cause,
An holy wrath I find,
And for your sake the bondage break
That knits me to my kind.

xvii.

"Hear me forswear man's sympathies,
His pleasant yea and no,
His riot on the piteous earth
Whereon his thistles grow,
His changing love—with stars above,
His pride—with graves below.

xvii.

"Hear me forswear his roof by night,
His bread and salt by day,
His talkings at the wood-fire hearth,
His greetings by the way,
His answering looks, his systemed
books,
All man, for aye and aye.

xviii.

"That so my purged, once human
heart,
From all the human rent,
May gather strength to pledge and
drink
Your wine of wonderment,
While you pardon me all blessedly
The woe mine Adam sent.

xix.

"And I shall feel your unseen looks
Innumerous, constant, deep,
And soft as haunted Adam once,
Though sadder round me creep—
As slumbering men have mystic ken
Of watchers on their sleep.

xx.

"And ever, when I lift my brow
At evening to the sun,
No voice of woman or of child
Recording 'Day is done.'
Your silences shall a love express,
More deep than such an one."

PART THE SECOND.

SHOWING TO WHOM THE VOW WAS DECLARED.

I.

THE poet's vow was inly sworn,
The poet's vow was told.
He shared among his crowding friends
The silver and the gold;
They clasping bland his gift, his hand
In a somewhat slacken hold.

II.

They wended forth, the crowding
friends,
With farewells smooth and kind.
They wended forth, the solaced
friends,

And left but twain behind:
One loved him true as brothers do,
And one was Rosalind.

III.

He said, "My friends have wended forth
With farewells smooth and kind;
Mine oldest friend, my plighted bride,
Ye need not stay behind:
Friend, wed my fair bride for my sake,
And let my lands ancestral make
A dower for Rosalind.

IV.

"And when beside your wassail board
Ye bless your social lot,
I charge you that the giver be
In all his gifts forgot,
Or alone of all his words recall
The last,—Lament me not."

V.

She looked upon him silently
With her large, doubting eyes,
Like a child that never knew but love,
Whom words of wrath surprise,
Till the rose did break from either cheek,
And the sudden tears did rise.

VI.

She looked upon him mournfully,
While her large eyes were grown
Yet larger with the steady tears,
Till, all his purpose known,
She turnèd slow, as she would go —
The tears were shaken down.

VII.

She turnèd slow, as she would go,
Then quickly turned again,
And gazing in his face to seek
Some little touch of pain,
"I thought," she said,—but shook
her head:
She tried that speech in vain.

VIII.

"I thought — but I am half a child,
And very sage art thou —
The teachings of the heaven and earth
Should keep us soft and low.
They have drawn *my* tears in early years,
Or ere I wept — as now.

IX.

"But now that in thy face I read
Their cruel homily,
Before their beauty I would fain
Untouched, unsoftened be,—
If I indeed could look on even
The senseless, loveless earth and heaven
As thou canst look on me!

X.

"And couldst thou as coldly view
Thy childhood's far abode,
Where little feet kept time with thine
Along the dewy sod,
And thy mother's look from holy book
Rose like a thought of God ?

XI.

"O brother,—called so, e'er her last
Betrothing words were said !
O fellow-watcher in her room,
With hushed voice and tread !
Rememberest thou how, hand in hand,
O friend, O lover, we did stand,
And knew that she was dead ?

XII.

"I will not live Sir Roland's bride,
That dower I will not hold;
I tread below my feet that go,
These parchments bought and sold:
The tears I weep are mine to keep,
And worthier than thy gold."

XIII.

The poet and Sir Roland stood
Alone, each turned to each,
Till Roland brake the silence left
By that soft-throbbing speech —
"Poor heart!" he cried, "it vainly tried
The distant heart to reach.

XIV.

"And thou, O distant, sinful heart
That climbest up so high
To wrap and blind thee with the snows
That cause to dream and die,
What blessing can from lips of man approach thee with his sigh ?

xv.

"Ay, what from earth—create for man,
And moaning in his moan?
Ay, what from stars—revealed to man,
And man-named one by one?
Ay, more! what blessing can be given
Where the spirits seven do show in heaven
A man upon the throne?

xvi.

"A man on earth we wandered once,
All meek and undefiled,
And those who loved him said 'He wept';
None ever said 'He smiled':
Yet there might have been a smile unseen,
When he bowed his holy face, I ween,
To bless that happy child.

xvii.

"And now we pleadeth up in heaven
For our humanities,
Till the ruddy light on seraphs' wings
In pale emotion dies.
They can better bear their Godhead's glare
Than the pathos of his eyes.

xviii.

"I will go pray our God to-day
To teach thee how to scan
His work divine, for human use,
Since earth on axle ran;
To teach thee to discern as plain
His grief divine, the blood-drop's stain
He left there, man for man.

xix.

"So, for the blood's sake shed by Him
Whom angels God declare,
Tears like it, moist and warm with love,
Thy reverent eyes shall wear,
To see i' the face of Adam's race
The nature God doth share."

xx.

"I heard," the poet said, "thy voice
As dimly as thy breath:
The sound was like the noise of life
To one near his death;

Or of waves that fail to stir the pale
Sear leaf they roll beneath.

xxi.

"And still between the sound and me
White creatures like a mist
Did interfloat confusedly,
Mysterious shapes unwist:
Across my heart and across my brow
I felt them droop like wreaths of snow,
To still the pulse they kist.

xxii.

"The castle and its lands are thine—
The poor's—it shall be done.
Go, man, to love! I go to live
In Courland hall, alone:
The bats along the ceilings cling,
The lizards in the floors do run,
And storms and years have worn and reft
The stain by human builders left
In working at the stone."

PART THE THIRD.

SHOWING HOW THE VOW WAS KEPT.

I.

He dwelt alone, and sun and moon
Were witness that he made
Rejection of his humanness
Until they seemed to fade:
His face did so, for he did grow
Of his own soul afraid.

II.

The self-poised God may dwell alone
With inward glorying;
But God's chief angel waiteth for
A brother's voice to sing;
And a lonely creature of sinful nature,
It is an awful thing.

III.

An awful thing that feared itself;
While many years did roll,
A lonely man, a feeble man,
A part beneath the whole,
He bore by day, he bore by night,
That pressure of God's infinite
Upon his finite soul.

IV.

The poet at his lattice sate
And downward looked he.
Three Christians wended by to
prayers.
With mute ones in their ee;
Each turned above a face of love,
And called him to the far chapelle
With voice more tuneful than its bell;
But still they wended three.

V.

There journeyed by a bridal pomp,
A bridegroom and his dame;
He speaketh low for happiness,
She blusheth red for shame:
But never a tone of benison
From out the lattice came.

VI.

A little child with inward song,
No louder noise to dare,
Stood near the wall to see at play
The lizards green and rare;
Unblessed the while for his childish
smile,
Which cometh unaware.

PART THE FOURTH.

SHOWING HOW ROSALIND FARED BY THE
KEEPING OF THE VOW.

I.

In death-sheets lieth Rosalind,
As white and still as they;
And the old nurse that watched her bed
Rose up with "Well-a-day!"
And oped the casement to let in
The sun, and that sweet, doubtful din
Whict droppeth from the grass and
bough
Sans wind and bird, none knoweth
how,
To cheer her as she lay.

II.

The old nurse started when she saw
Her sudden look of woe;
But the quick, wan tremblings round
her mouth
In a meek smile did go,
And calm she said, "When I am dead,
Dear nurse it shall be so.

III.

"Till then, shut out those sights and
sounds,
And pray God pardon me
That I without this pain no more
His blessed works can see;
And lean beside me, loving nurse,
That thou mayst hear, ere I am
worse
What thy last love should be."

IV.

The loving nurse leant over her,
As white she lay beneath,—
The old eyes searching, dim with
life,
The young ones dim with death,—
To read their look if sound forsook
The trying, trembling breath.

V.

"When all this feeble breath is done,
And I on bier am laid,
My tresses smoothed for never a feast,
My body in shroud arrayed,
Uplift each palm in a saintly calm,
As if that still I prayed.

VI.

"And heap beneath mine head the
flowers
You stoop so low to pull,—
The little white flowers from the wood
Which grow there in the cool,
Which *he* and I, in childhood's
games,
Went plucking, knowing not their
names,
And filled thine apron full.

VII.

"Weep not! I weep not. Death is
strong;
The eyes of Death are dry:
But lay this scroll upon my breast
When hushed its heavings lie,
And wait a while for the corpse's smile
Which shineth presently.

VIII.

"And when it shineth, straightway
call
Thy youngest children dear,
And bid them gently carry me
All barefaced on the bier;
But bid them pass my kirkyard grass
That waveth long anear.

IX.

"And up the bank where I used to sit,
And dream what life would be;
Along the brook with its sunny look
Akin to living glee;
O'er the windy hill, through the forest still,—
Let them gently carry me.

x.

"And through the piney forest still,
And down the open moorland,
Round where the sea beats mistily
And blindly on the foreland;
And let them chant that hymn I know,
Bearing me soft, bearing me slow,
To the ancient hall of Courland.

xi.

"And when withal they near the hall,
In silence let them lay
My bier before the bolted door,
And leave it for a day:
For I have vowed, though I am proud,
To go there as a guest in shroud,
And not be turned away."

xii.

The old nurse looked within her eyes,
Whose mutual look was gone;
The old nurse stooped upon her mouth,
Whose answering voice was done;
And nought she heard, till a little bird,
Upon the casement's woodbine swinging,
Broke out into a loud, sweet singing
For joy o' the summer sun:
"Alack! alack!" — she watched no more;
With head on knee she wailed sore,
And the little bird sang o'er and o'er
For joy o' the summer sun.

PART THE FIFTH.

SHOWING HOW THE VOW WAS BROKEN.

I.

THE poet oped his bolted door
The midnight sky to view;
A spirit-feel was in the air
Which seemed to touch his spirit bare

Whenever his breath he drew;
And the stars a liquid softness had,
As alone their holiness forbade
Their falling with the dew.

II.

They shine upon the steadfast hills,
Upon the swinging tide,
And the narrow track of beach,
And the murmuring pebbles pied:
They shine on every lovely place,
As it were fair beside.

III.

It lay before him, human-like,
Yet so unlike a thing I
More awful in its shrouded pomp
Than any crowned king;
All calm and cold, as it did hold
Some secret, glorying.

IV.

A heavier weight than of its clay
Clung to his heart and knee:
As if those folded palms could strike,
He staggered groaningly,
And then o'erhung, without a groan,
The neck, close mouth that smiled
alone,
Whose speech the scroll must be.

THE WORDS OF ROSALIND'S SCROLL.

"I left thee last a child at heart,
A woman scarce in years:
I come to thee a solemn corpse,
Which neither feels nor fears.
I have no breath to use in sighs:
They laid the dead-weights on mine eyes
To seal them safe from tears.

"Look on me with thine own calm look:
I meet it calm as thou.
No look of thine can change *this* smile,
Or break thy sinful vow.
I tell thee that my poor scorned heart
Is of thine earth — thine earth, a part:
It cannot vex thee now.

"But out, alas! these words are writ
By a living, loving one,
Adown whose checks the proofs of life,

The warm quick tears, do run:
Ah, let the unloving corpse control
Thy scorn back from the loving soul
Whose place of rest is won.

"I have prayed for thee, with bursting sobs,
When passion's course was free;
I have prayed for thee, with silent lips,
In the anguish none could see:
They whispered oft, 'She sleepeth soft'—
But I only prayed for thee.

"Go to! I pray for thee no more:
The corpse's tongue is still;
Its folded fingers point to heaven,
But point there stiff and chill;
No further wrong, no further woe,
Hath license from the sin below.
Its tranquil heart to thrill.

"I charge thee, by the living's prayer,
And the dead's silence,
To wring from out thy soul a cry
Which God shall hear and bless!
Lest Heaven's own palm droop in my hand,
And pale among the saints I stand,
A saint companionless."

v.

Bow lower down before the throne,
Triumphant Rosalind!
He boweth on thy corpse his face,
And weepeth as the blind:
'Twas a dread sight to see them so,
For the senseless corpse rocked to and fro
With the wail of his living mind.

vi.

But drearer sight, could such be seen,
His inward mind did lie,
Whose long-subjected humanness
Gave out its lion cry,
And fiercely rent its tenement
In a mortal agony.

vii.
I tell you, friends, had you heard his wail,
'Twould haunt you in court and mart,
And in merry feast, until you set
Your cup down to depart,—
That weeping wild of a reckless child
From a proud man's broken heart.

viii.
O broken heart, O broken vow,
That wore so proud a feature!
God, grasping as a thunderbolt
The man's rejected nature,
Smote him therewith i' the presence high
Of his so worshipped earth and sky
That looked on all indifferently—
A wailing human creature.

ix.
A human creature found too weak
To bear his human pain:
(May Heaven's dear grace have spoken peace
To his dying heart and brain!)
For when they came at dawn of day
To lift the lady's corpse away,
Her bier was holding twain.

x.
They dug beneath the kirkyard grass
For both one dwelling deep;
To which, when years had mossed
the stone,
Sir Roland brought his little son
To watch the funeral heap:
And when the happy boy would rather
Turn upward his blithe eyes to see
The wood-doves nodding from the tree,
"Nay, boy, look downward," said his father,
"Upon this human dust asleep,
And hold it in thy constant ken
That God's own unity compresses
(One into one) the human many,
And that his everlastingness is
The bond which is not loosed by any;
That thou and I this law must keep,
If not in love, in sorrow then—
Though smiling not like other men,
Still, like them we must weep."

THE ROMAUNT OF MARGRET.

"Can my affections find out nothing best,
But still and still remove?"

QUARLES.

I.

I PLANT a tree whose leaf
The yew-tree leaf will suut;
But when its shade is o'er you laid,
Turn round, and pluck the fruit.
Now reach my harp from off the wall
Where shines the sun aslant:
The sun may shine and we be cold!
O harken, loving hearts and bold,
Unto my wild romaut.
Margret, Margret.

II.

Sitteth the fair ladye
Close to the river-side
Which runneth on with a merry tone
Her merry thoughts to guide:
It runneth through the trees,
It runneth by the hill,
Nathless the lady's thoughts have
found
A way more pleasant still.
Margret, Margret.

III.

The night is in her hair,
And giveth shade to shade;
And the pale moonlight on her fore-
head white
Like a spirit's hand is laid;
Her lips part with a smile
Instead of speakings done:
I ween she thinketh of a voice,
Albeit uttering none.
Margret, Margret.

IV.

All little birds do sit
With heads beneath their wings;
Nature doth seem in a mystic dream,
Absorbed from her living things:

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That dream by that ladye
Is certes unpartook,
For she looketh to the high cold
stars
With a tender human look.
Margret, Margret.

V.

The lady's shadow lies
Upon the running river;
It lieth no less in its quietness,
For that which resteth never:
Most like a trusting heart
Upon a passing faith,
Or as upon the course of life
The steadfast doom of death.
Margret, Margret.

VI.

The lady doth not move,
The lady doth not dream;
Yet she seeth her shade no longer
laid
In rest upon the stream:
It shaketh without wind,
It parteth from the tide,
It standeth upright in the cleft moon-
light,
It sitteth at her side.
Margret, Margret.

VII.

Look in its face, ladye,
And keep thee from thy swound;
With a spirit bold thy pulses hold,
And hear its voice's sound:
For so will sound thy voice
When thy face is to the wall,
And such will be thy face, ladye,
When the maidens work thy pall.
Margret, Margret.

VIII.

"Am I not like to thee?"
 The voice was calm and low,
 And between each word you might
 have heard
 The silent forests grow;
"The like may sway the like;"
 By which mysterious law
 Mine eyes from thine, and my lips
 from thine,
 The light and breath may draw.
 Margret, Margret.

IX.

"My lips do need thy breath,
 My lips do need thy smile,
 And my pallid eyne, that light in
 thine
 Which met the stars erewhile:
 Yet go with light and life,
 If that thou lovest one
 In all the earth who loveth thee
 As truly as the sun.
 Margret, Margret.

X.

Her cheek had waxed white,
 Like cloud at fall of snow;
 Then, like to one at set of sun,
 It waxed red also;
 For love's name maketh bold,
 As if the loved were near:
 And then she sighed the deep, long
 sigh
 Which cometh after fear.
 Margret, Margret.

XI.

"Now, sooth, I fear thee not —
 Shall never fear thee now!"
 (And a noble sight was the sudden
 light
 Which lit her lifted brow.)
 "Can earth be dry of streams,
 Or hearts of love?" she said;
 "Who doubteth love can know not
 love:
 He is already dead."

Margret, Margret.

XII.

"I have . . . and here her lips
 Some word in pause did keep,
 And gave the while a quiet smile,
 As if they paused in sleep, —

"I have . . . a brother dear,
 A knight of knightly fame:
 I broidered him a knightly scarf
 With letters of my name.
 Margret, Margret

XIII.

"I fed his gray gosshawk,
 I kissed his fierce bloodhound,
 I sate at home when he might come,
 And caught his horn's far sound:
 I sang him hunter's songs,
 I poured him the red wine,
 He looked across the cup, and said,
I love thee, sister mine."
 Margret, Margret.

XIV.

IT trembled on the grass
 With a low, shadowy laughter;
 The sounding river which rolled, for-
 ever
 Stood dumb and stagnant after:
 "Brave knight thy brother is!
 But better loveth he
 Thy chalice wine than thy chanted
 song,
 And better both than thee,
 Margret, Margret."

XV.

The lady did not heed
 The river's silence, while
 Her own thoughts still ran at their
 will,
 And calm was still her smile.
 "My little sister wears
 The look our mother wore:
 I smooth her locks with a golden
 comb,
 I bless her evermore."
 Margret, Margret.

XVI.

"I gave her my first bird
 When first my voice it knew;
 I made her share my posies rare,
 And told her where they grew:
 I taught her God's dear name
 With prayer and praise to tell:
 She looked from heaven into my face,
 And said, *I love thee well."*
 Margret, Margret.

xvii.

IT trembled on the grass,
With a low, shadowy laughtiter;
You could see each bird as it woke
and stared
Through the shrivelled foliage
after.
" Fair child thy sister is !
But better loveth she
Thy golden comb than thy gathered
flowers,
And better both than thee,
Margret, Margret."

xviii.

Thy lady did not heed
The withering on the bough;
Still calm her smile, albeit the while
A little pale her brow:
" I have a father old,
The lord of ancient halls;
An hundred friends are in his court,
Yet only me he calls.
Margret, Margret.

xix.

" An hundred knights are in his
court.
Yet read I by his knee;
And when forth they go to the tour-
ney show .
I rise not up to see:
'Tis a weary book to read,
My tryst's at set of sun;
But loving and dear beneath the stars
Is his blessing when I've done."
Margret, Margret.

xx.

IT trembled on the grass
With a low, shadowy laughtiter;
And moon and star, though bright
and far,
Did shrink and darken after.
" High lord thy father is !
But better loveth he
His ancient halls than his hundred
friends,
His ancient halls, than thee,
Margret, Margret."

xxi.

The lady did not heed
That the far stars did fail;
Still calm her smile, albeit the while —
Nay, but she is not pale !

" I have more than a friend
Across the mountains dim:
No other's voice is soft to me,
Unless it nameth him."
Margret, Margret.

xxii.

" Though louder beats my heart,
I know his tread again,
And his fair plume aye, unless turned
away,
For the tears do blind me then:
We brake no gold, a sign
Of stronger faith to be;
But I wear his last look in my soul,
Which said, *I love but thee!*"
Margret, Margret.

xxiii.

IT trembled on the grass
With a low, shadowy laughtiter;
And the wind did toll, as a passing
soul
Were sped by church-bell after;
And shadows, 'stead of light,
Fell from the stars above,
In flakes of darkness on her face
Still bright with trusting love.
Margret, Margret.

xxiv.

" He *lored* but only thee !
That love is transient too.
The wild hawk's bill doth dabble still
I' the mouth that vowed thee true:
Will he open his dull eyes,
When tears fall on his brow ?
Behold the death-worm to his heart
Is a nearer thing than *thou*,
Margret, Margret."

xxv.

Her face was on the ground,
None saw the agony;
But the men at sea did that night
agree
They heard a drowning cry:
And when the morning brake,
Fast rolled the river's tide,
With the green trees waving overhead,
And a white corse laid beside.
Margret, Margret.

XXVI.

A knight's bloodhound and he
The funeral watch did keep;
With a thought o' the chase, he stroked
its face,
As it howled to see him weep.
A fair child kissed the dead,
But shrank before its cold.
And alone yet proudly in his hall
Did stand a baron old.

Margret, Margret.

XXVII.

Hang up my harp again !
I have no voice for song.
Not song, but wail, and mourners
pale,
Not bards, to love belong.
O failing human love !
O light, by darkness known !
Oh false, the while thou treadest earth!
Oh deaf beneath the stone !

Margret, Margret.

ISOBEL'S CHILD.

— “ so find we profit,
By losing of our prayers.”

SHAKESPEARE.

I.

To rest the weary nurse has gone:
An eight-day watch had watched
she,
Still rocking beneath sun and moon
The baby on her knee,
Till Isobel its mother said,
“ The fever waneth, wend to bed,
For now the watch comes round to
me.”

II.

Then wearily the nurse did throw
Her pallet in the darkest place
Of that sick-room, and slept and
dreamed :
For, as the gusty wind did blow
The night-lamp's flare across her
face,
She saw or seemed to see, but
dreamed,
That the poplars tall on the opposite
hill,
The seven tall poplars on the hill,
Did clasp the setting sun until
His rays dropped from him, pined and
still
As blossoms in frost,
Till he waned and paled, so weirdly
crossed,

To the color of moonlight which doth
pass
Over the dank ridged churchyard
grass,
The poplars held the sun, and he
The eyes of the nurse that they should
not see
— Not for a moment, the babe on her
knee,
Though she shuddered to feel that it
grew to be
Too chill, and lay too heavily.

III.

She only dreamed : for all the while
‘Twas Lady Isobel that kept
The little baby: and it slept
Fast, warm, as if its mother's smile,
Laden with love's dewy weight,
And red as rose of Harpocrate,
Dropt upon its eyelids, prest
Lashes to check in a sealed rest.

IV.

And more and more smiled Isobel
To see the baby sleep so well;
She knew not that she smiled.
Against the lattice, dull and wild
Drive the heavy, droning drops,
Drop by drop, the sound being one;

As momently time's segments fall
On the ear of God, who hears through
all

Eternity's unbroken monotone,
And more and more smiled Isobel
To see the baby sleep so well :
She knew not that she smiled.
The wind in intermission stops
Down in the beechen forest,
Then cries aloud
As one at the sorrest,
Self-stung, self-driven,
And rises up to its very tops,
Stiffening erect the branches bowed,
Dilating with a tempest-soul
The trees that with their dark hands
break
Through their own outline, and heavy
roll
Shadows as massive as clouds in
heaven
Across the castle lake.
And more and more smiled Isobel
To see the baby sleep so well.
She knew not that she smiled;
She knew not that the storm was wild;
Through the uproar drear she could
not hear
The castle clock which struck anear:
She heard the low, light breathing of
her child.

V.

Oh ! sight for wondering look,
While the external nature broke
Into such abandonment.
While the very mist, heart-rent
By the lightning, seemed to eddy
Against nature, with a din, —
A sense of silence and of steady
Natural calm appeared to come
From things without, and enter in
The human creature's room.

VI.

So motionless she sat,
The babe asleep upon her knees,
You might have dreamed their souls
had gone
Away to things inanimate,
In such to live, in such to moan,
And that their bodies had ta'en back,
In mystic change, all silences
That cross the sky in cloudy rack,
Or dwell beneath the reedy ground
In waters safe from their own sound:
Only she wore
The deepening smile I named before,

And that a deepening love exprest;
And who at once can love and rest ?

VII.

In sooth the smile that then was
keeping
Watch upon the baby sleeping,
Floated with its tender light
Downward, from the drooping eyes,
Upward, from the lips apart,
Over cheeks which had grown white
With an eight-day weeping :
All smiles come in such a wise
Where tears shall fall or have of old --
Like northern lights that fill the heart
Of heaven in sign of cold.

VIII.

Motionless she sat.
Her hair had fallen by its weight
On each side of her smile, and lay
Very blackly on the arm
Where the baby nestled warm,
Pale as baby carved in stone
Seen by glimpses of the moon
Up a dark cathedral aisle;
But through the storm no moonbeam
fell
Upon the child of Isobel —
Perhaps you saw it by the ray
Alone of her still smile.

IX.

A solemn thing it is to me
To look upon a babe that sleeps,
Wearing in its spirit-deeps
The undeveloped mystery
Of our Adam's taint and woe,
Which, when they developed be,
Will not let it slumber so;
Lying new in life beneath
The shadow of the coming death,
With that soft, low, quiet breath,
As if it felt the sun;
Knowing all things by their blooms.
Not their roots, yea, sun and sky
Only by the warmth that comes
Out of each; earth only by
The pleasant hues that o'er it run;
And human love by drops of sweet
White nourishment still hanging
round
The little mouth so slumber-bound:
All which broken sentiency
And conclusion incomplete,
Will gather and unite, and climb
To an immortality

Good or evil, each sublime,
Through life and death to life again.
O little lids, now folded fast,
Must ye learn to drop at last?
Our large and burning tears?
O warm quick body, must thou lie,
When the time comes round to die,
Still from all the whirl of years,
Bare of all the joy and pain?
O small frail being, wilt thou stand
At God's right hand,
Lifting up those sleeping eyes
Dilated by great destinies,
To an endless waking? thrones and
seraphim,
Through the long ranks of their solemnities,
Sunning thee with calm looks of
Heaven's surprise,
But thine alone, on Him?
Or else, self-willed, to tread the Godless place,
(God keep thy will!) feel thine own
energies
Cold, strong, objectless, like a dead
man's clasp,
The sleepless, deathless life within
thee grasp.
While myriad faces, like one changeless face,
With woe, not love's, shall glass thee
everywhere,
And overcome thee with thine own
despair?

x.

More soft, less solemn images
Drifted o'er the lady's heart
Silently as snow.
She had seen eight days depart
Hour by hour on bended knees,
With pale wrung hands and prayings low
And broken, through which came the sound
Of tears that fell against the ground,
Making sad stops: "Dear Lord, dear Lord!"
She still had prayed (the heavenly word
Broken by an earthly sigh)
— "Thou who didst not erst deny
The mother-joy to Mary mild,
Blessed in the blessed child
Which harkened in meek babyhood
Her cradle-hymn, albeit used
To all that music interfused
Is breasts of angels high and good!

Oh, take not, Lord, my babe away!
Oh, take not to thy songful heaven
The pretty baby thou hast given,
Or ere that I have seen him play
Around his father's knees and known
That he knew how my love has gone
From all the world to him.
Think, God among the cherubim,
How I shall shiver every day
In thy June sunshine, knowing where
The grave-grass keeps it from his fair
Still cheeks, and feel at every tread
His little body which is dead,
And hidden in thy turf'y fold,
Doth make thy whole warin' earth
a-cold!
O God, I am so young, so young —
I am not used to tears at nights
Instead of slumber — not to prayer
With sobbing lips, and hands outwring!
Thou knowest all my prayings were
"I bless thee, God, for past delights —
Thank God!" I am not used to bear
Hard thoughts of death; the earth
doth cover
No face from me of friend or lover:
And must the first who teaches me
The form of shrouds and funerals be
Mine own first-born beloved — he
Who taught me first this mother-love?
Dear Lord, who spreadest out above
Thy loving, transpierced hands to meet
All lifted hearts with blessing sweet,
Pierce not my heart, my tender heart
Thou madest tender! Thou who art
So happy in thy heaven alway,
Take not mine only bliss away!"

xi.

She so had prayed; and God, who
hears
Through seraph-songs the sound of
tears,
From that belovéd babe had ta'en
The fever and the beating pain,
And more and more smiled Isobel
To see the baby sleep so well.
(She knew not that she smiled, I wis)
Until the pleasant gradual thought
Which near her heart the smile in
wrought,
Now soft and slow, itself did seem
To float along a happy dream,
Beyond it into speech like this.

xii.

"I prayed for thee, my little child,
And God has heard my prayer!
And when thy babyhood is gone,
We two together undefiled
By men's repinings, will kneel down
Upon his earth which will be fair
(Not covering thee, sweet!) to us
twain,
And give him thankful praise."

xiii.

Dully and wildly drives the rain:
Against the lattices drives the rain.

xiv.

"I thank him now, that I can think
Of those same future days,
Nor from the harmless image shrink
Of what I there might see, —
Strange babies on their mothers' knee.
Whose innocent soft faces might
From off mine eyelids strike the light,
With looks not meant for me!"

xv.

Gustily blows the wind through the
rain,
As against the lattices drives the rain

xvi.

"But now, O baby mine, together
We turn this hope of ours again
To many an hour of summer
weather,
When we shall sit and intertwine
Our spirits, and instruct each other
In the pure loves of child and
mother!
Two human loves make one divine."

xvii.

The thunder tears through the wind
and the rain,
As full on the lattices drives the rain.

xviii.

"My little child, what wilt thou
choose?
Now let me look at thee and ponder.
What gladness from the gladnesses
Futurity is spreading under
Thy gladsome sight? Beneath the
trees
Wilt thou lean all day, and lose

Thy spirit with the river seen
Intermittently between
The winding beechen alleys, —
Half in labor, half repose,
Like a shepherd keeping sheep,
Thou, with only thoughts to keep
Which never a bound will overpass,
And which are innocent as those
That feed among Arcadian valleys
Upon the dewy grass?"

xix.

The large white owl that with age is
blind,
That hath sate for years in the old
tree hollow,
Is carried away in a gust of wind;
His wings could bear him not as fast
As he goeth now the lattice past;
He is borne by the winds, the rains
do follow,
His white wings to the blast outflow-
ing,
He hooteth in going,
And still in the lightnings coldly
glitter
His round unblinking eyes.

xx.

"Or, baby, wilt thou think it fitter
To be eloquent and wise, —
One upon whose lips the air
Turns to solemn verities
For men to breathe anew, and win
A deeper-seated life within?
Wilt be a philosopher,
By whose voice the earth and skies
Shall speak to the unborn?
Or a poet, broadly spreading
The golden immortalities
Of thy soul on natures lorn
And poor of such, them all to guard
From their decay, — beneath thy
treading,
Earth's flowers recovering hues of
Eden, —
And stars drawn downward by thy
looks,
To shine ascendant in thy books?"

xxi.

The tame hawk in the castle-yard,
How it screams to the lightning, with
its wet
Jagged plumes overhanging the para-
pet!
And at the lady's door the hound
Scratches with a crying sound.

XXII.

" But, O my babe, thy lids are laid
Close, fast upon thy cheek,
And not a dream of power and sheen
Can make a passage up between.
Thy heart is of thy mother's made,
Thy looks are very meek,
And it will be their chosen place
To rest on some beloved face,
As these on thine, and let the noise
Of the whole world go on, nor drown
The tender silence of thy joys:
Or, when that silence shall have grown
Too tender for itself, the same
Yearning for sound, — to look above
And utter its one meaning, LOVE,
That *He* may hear His name."

XXIII.

No wind, no rain, no thunder!
The waters had trickled not slowly,
The thunder was not spent,
Nor the wind near finishing:
Who would have said that the storm
was diminishing?
No wind, no rain, no thunder! .
Their noises dropped asunder
From the earth and the firmament,
From the towers and the lattices,
Abrupt and echoless
As ripe fruits on the ground unshaken
wholly
As life in death.
And sudden and solemn the silence
fell,
Startling the heart of Isabel
As the tempest could not:
Against the door went panting the
breath
Of the lady's hound whose cry was
still,
And she, constrained howe'er she
would not,
Lifted her eyes, and saw the moon
Looking out of heaven alone
Upon the poplared hill, —
A calm of God, made visible
That men might bless it at their
will.

XXIV.

The moonshine on the baby's face
Falleth clear and cold;
The mother's looks have fallen back
To the same place:
Because no moon with silver rack,
Nor broad sunrise in jasper skies,
Has power to hold
Our loving eyes,

Which still revert, as ever must
Wonder and Hope, to gaze on the
dust.

XXV.

The moonshine on the baby's face
Cold and clear remaineth;
The mother's looks do shrink away,
The mother's looks return to stay,
As charmed by what paineth:
Is any glamour in the case?
Is it dream, or is it sight?
Hath the change upon the wild
Elements that signs the night,
Passed upon the child?
It is not dream, but sight.

XXVI.

The babe has awakened from sleep,
And unto the gaze of its mother
Bent over it, listed another,—
Not the baby-looks that go
Unaimingly to and fro,
But an earnest gazing deep
Such as soul gives soul at length
When by work and wail of years
It winneth a solemn strength,
And mourneth as it wears.
A strong man could not brook,
With pulse unhurried by fears,
To meet that baby's look
O'er glazed by manhood's tears,
The tears of a man full grown,
With a power to wring our own,
In the eyes all undefined
Of a little three-months' child,—
To see that babe-brow wrought
By the witnessing of thought
To judgment's prodigy,
And the small soft mouth unweaned,
By mother's kiss o'erleaned,
(Putting the sound of loving
Where no sound else was moving
Except the speechless cry)
Quickened to mind's expression,
Shaped to articulation,
Yea, uttering words, yea, naming woe,
In tones that with it strangely
went,
Because so baby-innocent,
As the child spake out to the mother,
so:—

XXVII.

" O mother, mother, loose thy prayer,
Christ's name hath made it strong.
It bindeth me, it holdeth me,
With its most loving cruelty,

From floating my new soul along
The happy heavenly air.
It bindeth me, it holdeth me
In all this dark, upon this dull
Low earth by only weepers trod.
It bindeth me, it holdeth me!
Mine angel looketh sorrowful
Upon the face of God.¹

xxviii.

"Mother, mother, can I dream
Beneath your earthly trees?
I had a vision and a gleam;
I heard a sound more sweet than
these
When rippled by the wind:
Did you see the Dove with wings,
Bathed in golden glistenings
From a sunless light behind,
Dropping on me from the sky,
Soft as mother's kiss, until
I seemed to leap, and yet was still?
Saw you how his love-large eye
Looked upon me mystic calms,
Till the power of His divine
Vision was indrawn to mine?

xxix.

"Oh the dream within the dream!
I saw celestial places even.
Oh the vistas of high palms
Making finites of delight
Through the heavenly infinite,
Lifting up their green still tops
To the heaven of heaven!
Oh the sweet life-tree that drops
Shade like light across the river
Glorified in its forever
Flowing from the Throne!
Oh the shining holiness
Of the thousand, thousand faces
God-sunned by the thrond ONE,
And made intense with such a love,
That, though I saw them turned above,
Each loving seemed for also me!
And, oh the Unspeakable, the HE,
The manifest in secrerics,
Yet of mine own heart partaker
With the overcomming look
Of One who hath been once forsook,
And blesseth the forsaker!
Mother, mother, let me go
Toward the Face that looketh so!
Through the mystic winged Four

¹ "For I say unto you that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in 'heaven.' — MATT. xviii. 10.

Whose are inward, outward eyes
Dark with light of mysteries
And the restless evermore
"Holy, holy, holy." — through
The sevenfold lamps that burn in
view
Of cherubim and seraphim,
Through the four and twenty crowned
Stately elders white around,
Suffer me to go to Him!

xxx.

"Is your wisdom very wise,
Mother, on the narrow earth,
Very happy, very worth
That I should stay to learn?
Are these air-corrupting sighs
Fashioned by unlearned breath?
Do the students' lamps that burn
All night illumine death?
Mother, albeit this be so,
Loose thy prayer, and let me go
Where that bright chief angel stands,
Apart from all his brother bands,
Too glad for smiling, having bent
In angelic wilderment
O'er the depths of God, and brought
Reeling thence one only thought
To fill his own eternity.
He the teacher is for me,
He can teach what I would know:
Mother, mother, let me go!

xxxI.

"Can your poet make an Eden
No winter will undo,
And light a starry fire, while heed-
ing
His hearth's is burning too?
Drown in music the earth's din,
And keep his own wild soul within
The law of his own harmony?
Mother, albeit this be so,
Let me to my heaven go!
A little harp me waits thereby,—
A harp whose strings are golden all,
And tuned to music spherical,
Hanging on the green life-tree
Where no willows ever be.
Shall I miss that harp of mine?
Mother, no! the Eye divine
Turned upon it makes it shine;
And, when I touch it, poems sweet,
Like separate souls, shall fly from
it,
Each to the immortal fyte.
We shall all be poets there,
Gazing on the chieftest Fair.

xxxii.

"Love! earth's love! and can we
love?
Fixedly where all things move?
Can the sinning love each other?
Mother, mother,
I tremble in thy close embrace;
I feel thy tears down my face:
Thy prayers do keep me out of
bliss, —
Oh dreary earthly love?
Loose thy prayer, and let me go
To the place which loving is,
Yet not sad; and when is given
Escape to *thee* from this below,
Thou shalt behold me, that I wait
For thee beside the happy gate,
And silence shall be np in heaven
To hear our greeting kiss."

xxxiii.

The nurse awakes in the morning
sun,
And starts to see beside her bed
The lady with a grandeur spread
Like pathos o'er her face, as one
God-satisfied and earth-undone
The babe upon her arm was dead;
And the nurse could utter forth no
cry, —
She was awed by the calm in the
mother's eye.

xxxiv.

"Wake, nurse!" the lady said:
"We are waking, — he and I, —
I on earth, and he in sky:

And thou must help me to o'erlay
With garment white this little clay
Which needs no more our lullaby.

xxxv.

"I changed the cruel prayer I made,
And bowed my meekened face, and
prayed
That God would do his will; and
thus
He did it, nurse! He parted us;
And his sun shows victorious
The dead calm face, — and I am
calm,
And heaven is harkening a new
psalm.

xxxvi.

"This earthly noise is too anear,
Too loud, and will not let me hear
The little harp. My death will soon
Make silence."

And a sense of tune,
A satisfied love meanwhile
Which nothing earthly could de-
spoil,
Sang on within her soul.

xxxvii.

Oh you,
Earth's tender and impassioned few,
Take courage to intrust your love
To Him so named, who guards above
Its ends, and shall fulfil!
Breaking the narrow prayers that
may
Beftit your narrow hearts away
In his broad, loving will.

THE ROMAUNT OF THE PAGE.

I.

A KNIGHT of gallant deeds,
And a young page at his side,
From the holy war in Palestine
Did slow and thoughtful ride,
As each were a palmer, and told for
beads
The dews of the eventide.

II.

"O young page," said the knight,
"A noble page art thou!
Thou fearest not to steep in blood
The curls upon thy brow;
And once in the tent, and twice in the
fight,
Didst ward me a mortal blow."

III.

"O brave knight," said the page,
 "Or ere we hither came,
 We talk'd in tent, we talk'd in
 field,
 Of the bloody battle-game;
 But here, below this greenwood
 bough,
 I cannot speak the same.

IV.

"Our troop is far behind,
 The woodland calm is new,
 Our steeds, with slow grass-muffled
 hoofs,
 Tread deep the shadows through;
 And in my mind some blessing kind
 Is dropping with the dew.

V.

"The woodland calm is pure:
 I cannot choose but have
 A thought from these o' the beechen-
 trees
 Which in our England wave,
 And of the little finches fine
 Which sang there while in Palestine
 The warrior-hilt we drave.

VI.

"Methinks, a moment gone,
 I heard my mother pray:
 I heard, sir knight, the prayer for me
 Wherein she passed away;
 And I know the heavens are leaning
 down
 To hear what I shall say."

VII.

The page spake calm and high,
 As of no mean degree;
 Perhaps he felt in nature's broad
 Full heart his own was free:
 And the knight looked up to his lifted
 eye,
 Then answered, smilingly, —

VIII.

"Sir page, I pray your grace!
 Certes, I meant not so
 To cross your pastoral mood, sir
 page,
 With the crook of the battle-bow;
 But a knight may speak of a lady's
 face,
 I ween, in any mood or place,
 If the grasses die or grow.

IX.

"And this I meant to say,—
 My lady's face shall shine
 As ladies' faces use, to greet
 My page from Palestine:
 Or speak she fair, or prank she gay,
 She is no lady of mine.

X.

"And this I meant to fear,—
 Her bower may suit thee ill;
 For, sooth, in that saine field and tent
 Thy talk was somewhat still:
 And fitter thy hand for my knightly
 spear
 Than thy tongue for my lady's
 will."

XI.

Slowly and thankfully
 The young page bowed his head;
 His large eyes seemed to muse a smile,
 Until he blushed instead;
 And no lady in her bower, pardie
 Could blush more sudden red.
 "Sir knight, thy lady's bower to me
 Is suited well," he said.

XII.

Beati, beati, mortui!
 From the convent on the sea,
 One mile off, or scarce so nigh,
 Swells the dirge as clear and high
 As if that, over brake and lea,
 Bodily the wind did carry
 The great altar of St. Mary,
 And the fifty tapers burning o'er
 it,
 And the lady abbess dead before
 it,
 And the chanting nuns whom yes-
 ter week
 Her voice did charge and bless,—
 Chanting steady, chanting meek,
 Chanting with a solemn breath,
 Because that they are thinking less
 Upon the dead than upon death.

Beati, beati, mortui!
 Now the vision in the sound
 Wheelet on the wind around;
 Now it sweepeth back, away,—
 The uplands will not let it stay
 To dark the western sun:
Mortua! away at last,
 Or ere the page's blush is past!
 And the knight heard all, and the
 page heard none.

xiii.

"A boon, thou noble knight,
If ever I servèd thee!
Though thou art a knight, and I am a
page,
Now grant a boon to me;
And tell me, sooth, if dark or bright
If little loved, or loved aright,
Be the face of thy ladye."

xiv.

Gloomily looked the knight —
"As a son thou hast served me;
And would to none I had granted
boon,
Except to only thee!
For haply then I should love aright,
For then I should know if dark or
bright
Were the face of my ladye.

xv.

"Yet it ill suits my knightly tongue
To grudge that granted boon,
That heavy price from heart and life
I paid in silence down:
The hand that claimed it, cleared in
fine
My father's fame: I swear by mine
That price was nobly won!"

xvi.

"Earl Walter was a brave old earl,
He was my father's friend;
And while I rode the lists at court,
And little guessed the end,
My noble father in his shroud,
Against a slanderer lying loud,
He rose up to defend.

xvii.

"Oh, calm below the marble gray
My father's dust was strewn!
Oh, meek above the marble gray
His image prayed alone!
The slanderer lied; the wretch was
brave —
For, looking up the minster-nave,
He saw my father's knightly glaive
Was changed from steel to stone.

xviii.

"Earl Walter's glaive was steel,
With a brave old hand to wear it,
And dashed the lie back in the mouth
Which lied against the godly truth
And against the knightly merit:

The slanderer, 'neath the avenger's
heel,
Struck up the dagger in appeal
From stealthy lie to brutal force,
And out upon the traitor's corse
Was yielded the true spirit.

xix.

"I would mine hand had fought that
fight,
And justified my father!
I would mine heart had caught that
wound,
And slept beside him rather!
I think it were a better thing
Than murdered friend and marriage-
ring
Forced on my life together.

xx.

"Wail shook Earl Walter's house;
His true wife shed no tear:
She lay upon her bed as mute
As the earl did on his bier.
Till — 'Ride, ride fast,' she said at
last,
'And bring the avengèd's son anear!
Ride fast, ride free, as a dart can
flee;
For white of blee with waiting for
me
Is the corse in the next chamb're.'

xxi.

"I came, I knelt beside her bed;
Her calm was worse than strife.
'My husband, for thy father dear,
Gave freely, when thou wast not here,
His own and eke my life.
A boon! Of that sweet child we
make
An orphan for thy father's sake,
Make thou, for ours, a wife.'

xxii.

"I said, 'My steed neighs in the
court,
My bark rocks on the brine,
And the warrior's vow I am under
now
To free the pilgrim's shrine;
But fetch the ring, and fetch the
priest,
And call that daughter of thine,
And rule she wide from my castle on
Nyde
While I am in Palestine.'

XXIII.

"In the dark chamb're, if the bride
 was fair,
 Ye wis, I could not see;
But the steed thrice neighed, and the
 priest fast prayed,
 And wedded fast were we.
Her mother smiled upon her bed,
As at its side we knelt to wed;
 And the bride rose from her knee,
And kissed the smile of her mother
 dead,
 Or ever she kissed me.

XXIV.

"My page, my page, what grieves
 thee so,
 That the tears run down thy face?"—
"Alas, alas! mine own sister
 Was in thy lady's case:
But she laid down the silks she wore,
And followed him she wed before,
Disguised as his true servitor,
 To the very battle-place."

XXV.

And wept the page, but laughed the
 knight,
A careless laugh laughed he:
"Well done it were for thy sister,
 But not for my ladye!
My love, so please you, shall requite
No woman, whether dark or bright,
 Unwomaned if she be."

XXVI.

The page stopped weeping, and smiled
 cold:
"Your wisdom may declare
That womanhood is proved the best
By golden brooch and glossy vest
The mincing ladies wear;
Yet is it proved, and was of old,
Anear as well, I dare to hold,
 By truth, or by despair."

XXVII.

He smiled no more, he wept no more:
But passionate he spake:
"Oh, womanly she prayed in tent,
 When none beside did wake!
Oh, womanly she paled in fight,
 For one belov'd's sake!—
And her little hand, defiled with
 blood,
Her tender tears of womanhood
 Most woman-pure did make."

XXVIII.

"Well done it were for thy sistèr,
Thou tellest well her tale;
But for my lady, she shall pray
 I' the kirk of Nydesdale.
Not dread for me, but love for me,
 Shall make my lady pale:
No casque shall hide her woman's
 tear,
It shall have room to trickle clear
 Behind her woman's veil."

XXIX.

"But what if she mistook thy mind,
And followed thee to strife,
Then kneeing did entreat thy love,
 As Paynims ask for life?"
"I would forgive, and evermore
Would love her as my servitor,
 But little as my wife.

XXX.

"Look up! there is a small bright
 cloud
 alone amid the skies:
So high, so pure, and so apart,
 A woman's honor lies."
The page looked up; the cloud was
 sheen:
A sadder cloud did rush, I ween,
 Betwixt it and his eyes."

XXXI.

Then dimly dropped his eyes away
From welkin unto hill.
Ha! who rides there? the page is
 ware,
Though the cry at his heart is still;
And the page seeth all, and the knight
 seeth none,
Though banner and spear do fleck the
 sun,
 And the Saracens ride at will.

XXXII.

He speaketh calm, he speaketh low:
"Ride fast, my master, ride,
Or ere within the broadening dark
 The narrow shadows hide."
"Yea, fast, my page, I will do so,
 And keep thou at my side."

XXXIII.

"Now nay, now nay, ride on thy way
 Thy faithful page precede;
For I must loose on saddle-bow
 My battle-casque that galls, I trow,

The shoulder of my steed;
And I must pray, as I did vow,
For one in bitter need.

xxxiv.

"Ere night I shall be near to thee,
Now ride, my master, ride!
Ere night, as parted spirits cleave
To mortals too beloved to leave,
I shall be at thy side."

The knight smiled free at the fantasy,
And adown the dell did ride.

xxxv.

Had the knight looked up to the
page's face,
No smile the word had won;
Had the knight looked up to the
page's face,
I ween he had never gone;
Had the knight looked back to the
page's geste,
I ween he had turned anon,
For dread was the woe in the face so
young,
And wild was the silent geste that
thung
Casque, sword, to earth, as the boy
down sprung
And stood—alone, alone.

xxxvi.

He clinched his hands as if to hold
His soul's great agony—
"Have I renounced my womanhood
For wifehood unto *thee*,
And is this the last, last look of thine
That ever I shall see ?

xxxvii.

"Yet God thee save, and mayst thou
have
A lady to thy mind,
More woman-proud, and half as true,
As one thou leav'st behind !
And God me take with HIM to dwell,
For HIM I cannot love too well,
As I have loved my kind."

xxxviii.

SURE looketh up, in earth's despair,
The hopeful heavens to seek;
That little cloud still floateth there,
Whereof her loved did speak:
How bright the little cloud appears !
Her eyelids fall upon the tears,
And the tears down either cheek.

xxxix.

The tramp of hoof, the flash of steel—
The Paynims round her coming !
The sound and sight have made her
calm,—

False page, but truthful woman;
She stands amid them all unmoved;
A heart once broken by the loved
Is strong to meet the foeman.

xl.

"Ho, Christian page ! art keeping
sheep,
From pouring wine-cups resting?"—
"I keep my master's noble name
For warring, not for feasting;
And if that here Sir Hubert were,
My master brave, my master dear,
Ye would not stay the questing."

xli.

"Where is thy master, scornful page,
That we may slay or bind him?"—
"Now search the lea, and search the
wood,
And see if ye can find him !
Nathless, as hath been often tried,
Your Paynim heroes faster ride
Before him than behind him."

xlii.

"Give smoother answers, lying page,
Or perish in the lying!"—
"I trow that if the warrior brand
Beside my foot were in my hand,
Twere better at replying!"
They cursed her deep, they smote her
low,
They cleft her golden ringlets through:
The Loving is the Dying.

xliii.

She felt the emitter gleam down,
And met it from beneath
With smile more bright in victory
Than any sword from sheath,
Which flashed across her lip serene,
Most like the spirit-light between
The darks of life and death.

xliv.

In gemisco, ingemisco!
From the convent on the sea,
Now it sweeteth solemnly,
As over wood and over lea

Bodily the wind did carry
The great altar of St. Mary,
And the fifty tapers paling o'er it,
And the lady abbess stark before
it,
And the weary nuns with hearts that
faintly
Beat along their voices saintly —
Ingemisco, ingemisco!

Dirge for abbess laid in shroud
Sweepeth o'er the shroudless dead,
Page or lady, as we said,
With the dews upon her head,
All as sad if not as loud.
Ingemisco, ingemisco!
Is ever a lament begun
By any mourner under sun,
Which, ere it endeth, suits but one?

THE LAY OF THE BROWN ROSARY.

FIRST PART.

I.

"ONORA, Onora!" her mother is calling;
She sits at the lattice and hears the
dew falling
Drop after drop from the sycamores
laden
With dew as with blossom, and calls
home the maiden:
"Night cometh, Onora!"

II.

She looks down the garden-walk cavered with trees,
To the limes at the end where the
green arbor is:
"Some sweet thought or other may
keep where it found her.
While, forgot or unseen in the dream-light around her,
Night cometh — Onora!"

III.

She looks up the forest whose alleys
shoot on
Like the mute minster-aisles when
the anthem is done,
And the choristers, sitting with faces
aslant,
Feel the silence to consecrate more
than the chant—
"Onora, Onora!"

IV.

And forward she looketh across the
brown heath —
"Onora, art coming?" What is it
she seeth?
Nought, nought but the gray border-stone
that is wist
To dilate, and assume a wild shape in
mist —
"My daughter!" Then over

V.

The casement she leaneth, and as she
doth so
She is 'ware of her little son playing
below:
"Now where is Onora?" He hung
down his head
And spake not, then answering
blushed scarlet red, —
"At the tryst with her lover."

VI.

But his mother was wroth: in a sternness
quoth she,
"As thou play'st at the ball art thou
playing with me,
When we know that her lover to batte
is gone,
And the saints know above that she
lovelieth but one,
And will ne'er wed another?"

VII.

Then the boy wept aloud: 'twas a fair sight, yet sad,
To see the tears run down the sweet blooms he had.
He stamped with his foot, said, "The saints know I lied
Because truth that is wicked is fittest to hide:
Must I utter it, mother?"

VIII.

In his vehement childhood he hurried within,
And knelt at her feet as in prayer against sin;
But a child at a prayer never sobbeth as he —
"Oh! she sits with the nun of the brown rosary,
At nights in the ruin —

IX.

"The old convent ruin the ivy rots off,
Where the owl hoots by day, and the toad is sun-proof,
Where no singing-birds build, and the trees gaunt and gray
As in stormy seacoasts appear blasted one way, —
But is this the wind's doing?

X.

"A nun in the east wall was buried alive,
Who mocked at the priest when he called her to shrive,
And shrieked such a curse as the stone took her breath,
The old abbess fell backwards, and swooned unto death,
With an Ave half spoken.

XI.

"I tried once to pass it, myself and my hound,
Till, as fearing the lash, down he shivered to ground:
A brave hound, my mother! a brave hound, ye wot!
And the wolf thought the same with his fangs at her throat
In the pass of the Brocken.

XII.

"At dawn and at eve, mother, who sitteth there
With the brown rosary never used for a prayer?
Stoop low, mother, low! If we went there to see,
What an ugly great hole in that east wall must be
At dawn and at even!

XIII.

"Who meet there, my mother, at dawn and at even?
Who meet by that wall, never looking to heaven?
O sweetest my sister! what doeth with thee
The ghost of a nun with a brown rosary,
And a face turned from heaven?

XIV.

"St. Agnes o'erwatcheth my dreams, and erewhile
I have felt through mine eyelids the warmth of her smile;
But last night, as a sadness like pity came o'er her,
She whispered, 'Say two prayers at dawn for Onora:
The Tempted is sinning.'"

XV.

"Onora, Onora!" They heard her not coming,
Not a step on the grass, not a voice through the gloaming;
But her mother looked up, and she stood on the floor,
Fair and still as the moonlight that came there before,
And a smile just beginning.

XVI.

It touches her lips, but it dares not arise
To the height of the mystical sphere of her eyes;
And the large musing eyes, neither joyous nor sorry,
Sing on like the angels in separate glory
Between clouds of amber.

XVII.

For the hair droops in clouds amber-colored till stirred
Into gold by the gesture that comes with a word;
While—oh soft!—her speaking is so interwound
Of the dim and the sweet, 'tis a twilight of sound,
And floats through the chamber.

XVIII.

"Since thou shrivest my brother, fair mother," said she,
"I count on thy priesthood for marrying of me;
And I know by the hills that the battle is done,
That my lover rides on, will be here with the sun,
'Neath the eyes that behold thee."

XIX.

Her mother sate silent, too tender, I wis,
Of the smile her dead father smiled dying to kiss;
But the boy started up pale with tears, passion-wrought,—
"Oh wicked fair sister! the hills utter nought;
If he cometh, who told thee?"

XX.

"I know by the hills," she resumed calm and clear,
"By the beauty upon them, that ~~me~~ is near;
Did they ever look so since he bade me adieu?
Oh, love in the waking, sweet brother, is true
As St. Agnes in sleeping!"

XXI.

Half ashamed and half softened, the boy did not speak,
And the blush met the lashes which fell on his cheek.
She bowed down to kiss him: dear saints, did he see
Or feel on her bosom the BROWN ROSARY,
That he shrank away weeping?

SECOND PART.

A bed. ONORA sleeping. Angels, but not near.

First Angel.

Must we stand so far, and she So very fair?

Second Angel.

As bodies be.

First Angel.

And she so mild?

Second Angel.

As spirits when

They mocken, not to God, but men.

First Angel.

And she so young, that I who bring Good dreams for saintly children,

night

Mistake that small soft face to-night,
And fetch her such a blessed thing,
That at her wakings she would weep
For childhood lost anew in sleep.
How hath she sinned?

Second Angel.

In bartering love,—

God's love for man's.

First Angel.

We may reprove

The world for this, not only her.

Let me approach to breathe away

This dust o' the heart with holy air.

Second Angel.

Stand off! She sleeps, and did not pray.

First Angel.

Did none pray for her?

Second Angel.

Ay, a child,

Who never, praying, wept before:

While in a mother undefiled

Prayer goeth on in sleep, as true

And pauseless as the pulses do.

First Angel.

Then I approach.

Second Angel.

It is not WILLED.

First Angel.

One word: is she redeemed?

Second Angel.

No more!

The place is filled. [Angels vanish.

Evil Spirit in a nun's garb by the bed.

Forbear that dream, forbear that dream! too near to heaven it leaned.

Onora in sleep.

Nay, leave me this,—but only this!

'tis but a dream, sweet fiend.

Evil Spirit,
It is a thought.

Onora in sleep.

A sleeping thought, most innocent of
good:
It doth the Devil no harm, sweet
fiend: it cannot if it would.
I say in it no holy hymn, I do no holy
work,
I scarcely hear the sabbath-bell that
chimeth from the kirk.

Evil Spirit.

Forbear that dream, forbear that
dream!

Onora in sleep.

Nay, let me dream at least.
That far-off bell, it may be took for
viol at a feast:
I only walk among the fields beneath
the autumn sun,
With my dead father, hand in hand,
as I have often done.

Evil Spirit.

Forbear that dream, forbear that
dream!

Onora in sleep.

Nay, sweet fiend, let me go:
I nevermore can walk with him, oh,
nevermore but so!
For they have tied my father's feet
beneath the kirkyard stone;
Oh, deep and straight, oh, very
straight, they move at nights
alone;
And then he calleth through my
dreams, he calleth tenderly,
"Come forth, my daughter, my be-
loved, and walk the fields with
me!"

Evil Spirit.

Forbear that dream, or else disprove
its pureness by a sign.

Onora in sleep.

Speak on, thou shalt be satisfied: my
word shall answer thine.
I heard a bird which used to sing
when I a child was praying,
I see the poppies in the corn I used to
sport away in:
What shall I do,—tread down the
dew, and pull the blossoms
blowing?
Or clap my wicked hands to fright the
finches from the rowen?

Evil Spirit.

Thou shalt do something harder still.
Stand up where thou dost stand,
Among the fields of Dreamland, with
thy father hand in hand,

And clear and slow repeat the vow,
declare its cause and kind,
Which not to break, in sleep or wake,
thou begrest on thy mind.

Onora in sleep.

I bear a vow of sinful kind, a vow for
mournful cause;
I vowed it deep, I vowed it strong;
the spirits laughed applause;
The spirits trailed along the pines
low laughter like a breeze,
While, high between their swinging
tops, the stars appeared to
freeze.

Evil Spirit.

More calm and free, speak out to me
why such a vow was made.

Onora in sleep.

Because that God decreed my death,
and I shrank back afraid.
Have patience, O dead father mine!
I did not fear to die.

I wish I were a young dead child, and
had thy company!

I wish I lay beside thy feet, a buried
three-year child,

And wearing only a kiss of thine upon
my lips that smiled!

The linden-tree that covers thee might
so have shadowed twain;

For death itself I did not fear — 'tis
love that makes the pain:

Love feareth death. I was no child;
I was betrothed that day;

I wore a troth-kiss on my lips I could
not give away.

How could I bear to lie content and
still beneath a stone,

And feel mine own betrothed go
by — alas! no more mine
own —

Go leading by in wedding pomp some
lovely lady brave,

With cheeks that blushed as red as
rose, while mine were white in
grave?

How could I bear to sit in heaven, on
e'er so high a throne,

And hear him say to her — to her,
that else he loveth none?

Though e'er so high I sat above,
though e'er so low he spake,

As clear as thunder I should hear the
new oath he might take,

That hers, forsooth, were heavenly
eyes — ah me, while very dim

Some heavenly eyes (indeed of
heaven!) would darken down to
him!

Evil Spirit.
Who told thee thou wast called to death?

Onora in sleep.

I sate all night beside thee:
The gray owl on the ruined wall shut
both his eyes to hide thee,
And ever he flapped his heavy wing
all brokenly and weak,
And the long grass waved against the sky, around his gasping beak.
I sate beside thee all the night, while the moonlight lay forlorn
Strewn round us like a dead world's shroud in ghastly fragments torn;
And through the night, and through the hush, and over the flapping wing,
We heard beside the heavenly gate the angels murmurings.
We heard them say, "Put day to day, and count the days to seven,
And God will draw Onora up the golden stairs of heaven:
And yet the evil ones have leave that purpose to defer;
For if she has no need of HIM, He has no need of her."

Evil Spirit.

Speak out to me, speak bold and free.
Onora in sleep.

And then I heard thee say,
"I count upon my rosary brown the hours thou hast to stay;
Yet God permits us evil ones to put by that decree,
Since, if thou hast no need of HIM, He has no need of thee:
And, if thou wilt forego the sight of angels, verily
Thy true love gazing on thy face shall guess what angels be;
Nor bride shall pass, save thee" . . .
Alas! my father's hand's a cold,
The meadows seem . . .

Evil Spirit.

Forbear the dream, or let the vow be told.

Onora in sleep.

I vowed upon thy rosary brown, this string of antique beads,
By charnel lichens overgrown, and dank among the weeds,
This rosary brown which is thine own, — lost soul of buried nun!
Who, lost by vow, wouldst render now all souls alike undone, —

I vowed upon thy rosary brown, — and, till such vow should break,
A pledge always of living days 'twas hung around my neck, —
I vowed to thee on rosary (dead father, look not so!)
I would not thank God in my weal, nor seek God in my woe.

Evil Spirit.

And canst thou prove . . .

Onora in sleep.

O love, my love! I felt him near again!
I saw his steed on mountain-head, I heard it on the plain:
Was this no weal for me to feel? Is greater weal than this?

Yet when he came I wept his name — and the angels heard but his.

Evil Spirit.

Well done, well done!

Onora in sleep.

Ah me, the sun! the dreamlight 'gins to pine, —
Ah me, how dread can look the dead! Aroynt thee, father mine!

She starteth from slumber, she sitteth upright,
And her breath comes in sobs, while she stares through the night.
There is nought; the great willow, her lattice before,
Large-drawn in the moon, lieth calm on the floor;
But her hands tremble fast as their pulses, and, free From the death-clasp, close over — the BROWN ROSARY.

THIRD PART.

I.
'Tis a morn for a bridal: the merry bride-bell
Rings clear through the greenwood that skirts the chapelle,
And the priest at the altar awaiteth the bride,
And the sacristans slyly are jesting aside
At the work shall be doing;

II.
While down through the wood rides that fair company,
The youths with the courtship, the maids with the glee,

Till the chapel-cross opens to sight,
and at once
All the maidens sigh demurely, and
think for the nonce,
“ And so endeth a wooing ! ”

III.

And the bride and the bridegroom
are leading the way,
With his hand on her rein, and a
word yet to say:
Her dropt eyelids suggest the soft
answers beneath,
And the little quick smiles come and
go with her breath
When she sigheth or speaketh.

IV.

And the tender bride-mother breaks
off unaware
From an Ave, to think that her
daughter is fair,
Till in nearing the chapel, and glan-
cing before,
She seeth her little son stand at the
door:
Is it play that he seeketh ?

V.

Is it play when his eyes wander inno-
cent-wild,
And sublimed with a sadness unfitting
a child?
He trembles not, weeps not: the pas-
sion is done,
And calmly he kneels in their midst,
with the sun
On his head like a glory.

VI.

“ O fair-featured maidens, ye are
many ! ” he cried,
“ But in fairness and vileness who
matcheth the bride ?
O brave-hearted youths, ye are many !
but whom
For the courage and woe can ye match
with the groom
As ye see them before ye ? ”

VII.

Out spake the bride’s mother, “ The
vileness is thine,
If thou shame thine own sister, a
bride at the shrine ! ”

Out spake the bride’s lover, “ The
vileness be mine,
If he shame mine own wife at the
hearth or the shrine,
And the charge be unprovèd ! ”

VIII.

“ Bring the charge, prove the charge,
brother ! speak it aloud:
Let thy father and hers hear it deep
in his shroud ! ”
— “ O father, thou seest, for dead eyes
can see,
How she wears on her bosom a BROWN
ROSARY,
O my father beloved ! ”

IX.

Then outlaughed the bridegroom, and
outlaughed withal
Both maidens and youths by the old
chapel-wall;
“ So she wearcth no love-gift, kind
brother,” quoth he,
“ She may wear, an she listeth, a
brown rosary,
Like a pure-hearted lady ”

X.

Then swept through the chapel the
long bridal train;
Though he speake to the bride, she
replied not again.
On, as one in a dream, pale and state-
ly she went
Where the altar-lights burn o’er the
great sacrament,
Faint with daylight, but steady.

XI.

But her brother had passed in be-
tween them and her,
And calmly kneelt down on the high
altar-stair —
Of an infantine aspect so stern to the
view
That the priest could not smile on the
child’s eyes of blue
As he would for another.

XII.

He knelt like a child, marble-sculp-
tured and white,
That seems kneeling to pray on the
tomb of a knight,

With a look taken up to each iris of
stone
From the greatness and death where
he kneleth, but none
From the face of a mother.

XIII.
"In your chapel, O priest! ye have
wedded and shriven
Fair wives for the hearth, and fair
sinners for heaven;
But this fairest, my sister, ye think
now to wed,
Bid her kneel where she standeth,
and shrive her instead:
Oh, shrive her, and wed not!"

XIV.
In tears, the bride's mother, "Sir
priest, unto thee
Would he lie, as he lied to this fair
company."
In wrath, the bride's lover, "The lie
shall be clear!—
Speak it out, boy! the saints in their
niches shall hear:
Be the charge proved, or said
not!"

XV.
Then, serene in his childhood, he
lifted his face,
And his voice sounded holy, and fit
for the place,
"Look down from your niches, ye
still saints, and see
How she wears on her bosom a BROWN
ROSARY!
Is it used for the praying?

XVI.
The youths looked aside,—to laugh
there were a sin,—
And the maidens' lips trembled from
smiles shut within;
Quoth the priest, "Thou art wild,
pretty boy! Blessed she
Who prefers at her bridal a brown
rosary
To a worldly arraying."

XVII.
The bridegroom spake low, and led
onward the bride,
And before the high altar they stood
side by side;

The rite-book is opened, the rite is
begun;
They have knelt down together to rise
up as one.
Who laughed by the altar?

XVIII.
The maidens looked forward, the
youths looked around,
The bridegroom's eye flashed from his
prayer at the sound;
And each saw the bride, as if no bride
she were,
Gazing cold at the priest without ges-
ture of prayer,
As he read from the psalter.

XIX.
The priest never knew that she did so,
but still
He felt a power on him too strong for
his will;
And whenever the Great Name was
there to be read,
His voice sank to silence; THAT could
not be said,
Or the air could not hold it.

XX.
"I have sinnèd," quoth he: "I have
sinned, I wot;"
And the tears ran adown his old
cheeks at the thought:
They dropped fast on the book; but
he read on the same,
And aye was the silence where should
be the NAME,
As the choristers told it.

XXI.
The rite-book is closed; and, the rite
being done,
They who knelt down together arise
up as one:
Fair riseth the bride—oh, a fair
bride is she!
But, for all (think the maidens) that
brown rosary,
No saint at her praying!

XXII.
What aileth the bridegroom? He
glares blank and wide,
Then, suddenly turning, he kisseth
the bride:

His lips stung her with cold; she
glanced upwardly mute;
"Mine own wife," he said, and fell
stark at her foot
In the word he was saying.

XXIII.

They have lifted him up; but his head
sinks away,
And his face sheweth bleak in the
sunshine and gray.
Leave him now where he lieth; for
oh, nevermore
Will he kneel at an altar, or stand on
a floor!
Let his bride gaze upon him.

XXIV.

Long and still was her gaze, while
they chafed him there,
And breathed in the mouth whose last
life had kissed her.
But when they stood up—only *they!*
with a start
The shriek from her soul, struck her
pale lips apart:
She has lived, and forgone him!

XXV.

And low on his body she droppeth
adown.
"Didst call me thine own wife, be-
loved, thine own?
Then take thine own with thee! thy
coldness is warm
To the world's cold without thee!
Come, keep me from harm
In a calm of thy teaching."

XXVI.

She looked in his face earnest-long,
as in sooth
There were hope of an answer, and
then kissed his mouth,
And with head on his bosom wept,
wept bitterly,—
"Now, O God, take pity—take pity
on me!
God, hear my beseeching!"

XXVII.

She was 'ware of a shadow that
crossed where she lay;
She was 'ware of a presence that
withered the day:

Wild she sprang to her feet, "I sur-
render to thee
The broken vow's pledge, the ac-
cursed rosary,—
I am ready for dying!"

XXVIII.

She dashed it in scorn to the marble-
paved ground,
Where it fell mute as snow, and a
weird music-sound
Crept up, like a chill, up the aisles
long and dim,
As the fiends tried to mock at the
choristers' hymn
And moaned in the trying.

FOURTH PART.

ONORA looketh listlessly adown the
garden-walk:
"I am weary, O my mother, of thy
tender talk.
I am weary of the trees a-waving to
and fro,
Of the steadfast skies above, the run-
ning brooks below.
All things are the same but I,—only
I am dreary,
And, mother, of my dreariness behold
me very weary.
"Mother, brother, pull the flowers
I planted in the spring,
And smiled to think I should smile
more upon their gathering:
The bees will find out other flowers
—oh, pull them, dearest mine,
And carry them and carry me before
St. Agnes' shrine."
—Wherat they pulled the summer
flowers she planted in the
spring,
And her and them all mournfully to
Agnes' shrine did bring.
She looked up to the pictured saint,
and gently shook her head:
"The picture is too calm for me—too
calm for me," she said.
"The little flowers we brought with
us, before it we may lay,
For those are used to look at heaven;
but I must turn away:
Because no sinner under sun can dare
or bear to gaze
On God's or angel's holiness, except
in Jesu's face."

She spoke with passion after pause:
 " And were it wisely done
 If we who cannot gaze above should
 walk the earth alone ?
 If we whose virtue is so weak should
 have a will so strong,
 And stand blind on the rocks to
 choose the right path from the
 wrong ?
 To choose perhaps a love-lit hearth,
 instead of love and heaven,—
 A single rose for a rose-tree which
 beareth seven times seven ?
 A rose that droppeth from the hand,
 that faileth in the breast,
 Until, in grieving for the worst, we
 learn what is the best ! "

Then breaking into tears : " Dear
 God," she cried, " and must we
 see
 All blissful things depart from us or
 ere we go to THEE ?
 We cannot guess thee in the wood, or
 hear thee in the wind ?
 Our cedars must fall round us ere we
 see the light behind ?

Ay sooth, we feel too strong in weal
 to need thee on that road;
 But, woe being come, the soul is dumb
 that crieth not on ' God.' "

Her mother could not speak for tears:
 she ever mused thus,
" The bees will find out other flowers —
 but what is left for us ?
 But her young brother stayed his
 sobs, and knelt beside her knee,
 — " Thou sweetest sister in the world,
 hast never a word for me ?"
 She passed her hand across his face,
 she pressed in on his cheek,
 So tenderly, so tenderly, she needed
 not to speak.

The wreath which lay on shrine that
 day, at vespers bloomed no
 more.
 The woman fair who placed it there
 had died an hour before.
 Both perished mute for lack of root
 earth's nourishment to reach.
 O reader, breathe (the ballad saith)
 some sweetness out of each !

A ROMANCE OF THE GANGES.

I.
 SEVEN maidens 'neath the midnight
 Stand near the river-sea,
 Whose water sweepeth white around
 The shadow of the tree.
 The moon and earth are face to face,
 And earth is slumbering deep;
 The wave-voice seems the voice of
 dreams
 That wander through her sleep.
 The river floweth on.

II.
 What bring they 'neath the mid-
 night,
 Beside the river-sea ?
 They bring the human heart wherein
 Noightly calm can be;

That droppeth never with the wind,
 Nor drieth with the dew:
 Oh, calm it, God ! thy calm is broad
 To cover spirits too.
 The river floweth on.

III.
 The maidens lean them over
 The waters, side by side,
 And shun each other's deepening
 eyes,
 And gaze adown the tide;
 For each within a little boat
 A little lamp hath put,
 And heaped for freight some lily's
 weight,
 Or scarlet rose half shut.
 The river floweth on

IV.

Of shell of cocoa carven
 Each little boat is made:
 Each carries a lamp, and carries a flower,
 And carries a hope unsaid;
 And when the boat hath carried the lamp
 Unquenched till out of sight,
 The maiden is sure that love will endure;
 But love will fail with light.
 The river floweth on.

V.

Why, all the stars are ready
 To symbolize the soul,—
 The stars untroubled by the wind,
 Unwearied as they roll;
 And yet the soul by instinct sad
 Reverts to symbols low,—
 To that small flame whose very name
 Breathed o'er it, shakes it so.
 The river floweth on.

VI.

Six boats are on the river,
 Seven maidens on the shore,
 While still above them steadfastly
 The stars shine evermore.
 Go, little boats, go soft and safe,
 And guard the symbol spark!
 The boats aight go safe and bright
 Across the waters dark.
 The river floweth on.

VII.

The maiden Luti watcheth
 Where onwardly they float:
 That look in her dilating eyes
 Might seem to drive her boat:
 Her eyes still mark the constant fire,
 And kindling unawares
 That hopeful while, she lets a smile
 Creep silent through her prayers.
 The river floweth on.

VIII.

The smile — where hath it wandered?
 She riseth from her knee,
 She holds her dark, wet locks away —
 There is no light to see!
 She cries a quick and bitter cry —
 "Nuleeni, launch me thine!
 We must have light abroad to-night,
 For all the wreck of mine."
 The river floweth on.

IX.

"I do remember watching
 Beside this river-bed
 When on my childish knee was leaned
 My dying father's head:
 I turned mine own to keep the tears
 From falling on his face:
 What doth it prove when Death and
 Love
 Choose out the selfsame place?"
 The river floweth on.

X.

"They say the dead are joyful
 The death-change here receiving:
 Who say — ah me! who dare to say
 Where joy comes to the living?
 Thy boat, Nuleeni! look not sad —
 Light up the waters rather!
 I weep no faithless lover where
 I wept a loving father."

The river floweth on.

XI.

"My heart foretold his falsehood
 Ere my little boat grew dim;
 And though I closed mine eyes to
 dream
 That one last dream of him,
 They shall not now be wet to see
 The shining vision go:
 From earth's cold love I look above
 To the holy house of snow."¹
 The river floweth on.

XII.

"Come thou — thou never knewest
 A grief that thou shouldst fear
 one!
 Thou weardest still the happy look
 That shines beneath a dear one:
 Thy humming-bird is in the sun,²
 Thy cuckoo in the grove,
 And all the three broad worlds for
 thee
 Are full of wandering love."
 The river floweth on.

¹ The Hindoo heaven is localized on the summit of Mount Meru, one of the mountains of Himalaya or Himmaleh, which signifies, I believe, in Sanscrit, the abode of snow, winter, or coldness.

² Himadeva, the Indian god of love, is imagined to wander through the three worlds, accompanied by the humming-bird, cuckoo, and gentle breezes.

XIII.

"Why, maiden, dost thou loiter?
What secret wouldst thou cover?
That peepul cannot hide thy boat,
And I can guess thy lover;
I heard thee sob his name in sleep,
It was a name I knew:
Come, little maid, be not afraid,
But let us prove him true!"

The river floweth on.

XIV.

The little maiden cometh,
She cometh shy and slow;
I ween she seeth through her lids,
They drop adown so low:
Her tresses meet her small bare feet,
She stands, and speaketh nought,
Yet blusheth red as if she said
The name she only thought.

The river floweth on.

XV.

She knelt beside the water,
She lighted up the flame,
And o'er her youthful forehead's calm
The fitful radiance came:
"Go, little boat, go soft and safe,
And guard the symbol spark!"
Soft, safe doth float the little boat
Across the waters dark.

The river floweth on.

XVI.

Glad tears her eyes have blinded,
The light they cannot reach;
She turneth with that sudden smile
She learnt before her speech.
"I do not hear his voice, the tears
Have dimmed my light away;
But the symbol light will last to-
night,
The love will last for aye!"

The river floweth on.

XVII.

Then Luti spake behind her,
Out spake she bitterly:
"By the symbol light that lasts to-
night
Wilt vow a vow to me?"
Nuleeni gazeth up her face,
Soft answer maketh she:
"By loves that last' when lights are
past
I vow that vow to thee."

The river floweth on.

XVIII.

An earthly look had Luti,
Though her voice was deep as
prayer:
"The rice is gathered from the plains
To cast upon thine hair;¹
But when he comes his marriage-band
Around thy neck to throw,
Thy bride-smile raise to meet his
gaze,
And whisper, *There is one betrays,*
While Luti suffers woe!"

The river floweth on.

XIX.

"And when, in seasons after,
Thy little bright-faced son
Shall lean against thy knee, and ask
What deeds his sire hath done,
Press deeper down thy mother-smile
His glossy curls among,
View deep his pretty childish eyes,
And whisper, *There is none denies,*
While Luti speaks of wrong.

The river floweth on.

XX.

Nuleeni looked in wonder,
Yet softly answered she:
"By loves that last when lights are
past
I vowed that vow to thee.
But why glads it thee that a bride-day
be
By a word of *woe* defiled?
That a word of *wrong* take the cradle-
song
From the ear of a sinless child?" —
"Why?" Luti said, and her laugh
was dread,
And her eyes dilated wild —
"That the fair new love may her
bridegroom prove,
And the father shaine the child!"

The river floweth on.

XXI.

"Thou flowest still, O river,
Thou flowest 'neath the moon;
Thy lily hath not changed a leaf,²
Thy charminèd lute a tune:

¹ The casting of rice upon the head, and the fixing of the band or tali about the neck, are parts of the Hindoo marriage ceremonial.

² The Ganges is represented as a white woman, with a water-lily in her right hand, and in her left a lute.

He mixed his voice with thine, and
his

Was all I heard around;
But now, beside his chosen bride,
I hear the river's sound."

The river floweth on.

XXIII.

"I gaze upon her beauty
Through the tresses that inwreath the
it.
The light above thy wave is hers,
My rest alone beneath it:
Oh, give me back the dying look
My father gave thy water!

Give back — and let a little love
O'erwatch his weary daughter!
The river floweth on.

XXIII.

" Give back ! " she hath departed,
The word is wandering with her;
And the stricken maidens hear afar
The step and cry together.
Frail symbols ? None are frail enow
For mortal joys to borrow !
While bright doth float Nuleeni's
boat,
She weepeth dark with sorrow.
The river floweth on.

RHYME OF THE DUCHESS MAY.

I.

To the belfry, one by one, went the
ringers from the sun,
(Toll slowly)
And the oldest ringer said, " Ours is
music for the dead
When the rebeccs are all done."

II.

Six abeles i' the churchyard grow on
the north side in a row,
(Toll slowly)
And the shadows of their tops rock
across the little slopes
Of the grassy graves below.

III.

On the south side and the west a
small river runs in haste,
(Toll slowly)
And, between the river flowing and
the fair green trees a-growing,
Do the dead lie at their rest.

IV.

On the east I sate that day, up against
a willow gray,
(Toll slowly)
Through the rain of willow-branches
I could see the low hill-ranges,
And the river on its way.

V.

There I sate beneath the tree, and the
bell tolled solemnly,
(Toll slowly)
While the trees' and river's voices
flowed between the solemn
noises,—
Yet death seemed more loud to
me.

VI.

There I read this ancient rhyme while
the bell did all the time
(Toll slowly)
And the solemn knell fell in with the
tale of life and sin,
Like a rhythmic fate sublime.

THE RHYME.

I.

Broad the forests stood (I read) on the
hills of Integed;
(Toll slowly)
And three hundred years had stood
mute adown each hoary wood,
Like a full heart having prayed.

II.

And the little birds sang east, and the
little birds sang west;
(Toll slowly)

And but little thought was theirs of
the silent antique years,
In the building of their nest.

III.

Down the sun dropt large and red on
the towers of Linteged,—
(Toll slowly)

Lance and spear upon the height,
bristling strange in fiery light,
While the castle stood in shade.

IV.

There the castle stood up black 'with
the red sun at its back,'
(Toll slowly)

Like a sullen, smouldering pyre with
a top that flickers fire
When the wind is on its track.

V.

And five hundred archers tall did be-
siege the castle wall,
(Toll slowly)

And the castle seethed in blood, four-
teen days and nights had stood
And to-night was near its fall.

VI.

Yet thereunto, blind to doom, three
months since, a bride did come,
(Toll slowly)

One who proudly trod the floors, and
softly whispered in the doors.
" May good angels bless our home."

VII.

Oh, a bride of queenly eyes, with a
front of constancies,
(Toll slowly)

Oh, a bride of cordial mouth where
the untired smile of youth
Did light outward its own sighs!

VIII.

'Twas a duke's fair orphan-girl, and
her uncle's ward — the earl,
(Toll slowly)

Who betrothed her twelve years old,
for the sake of dowry gold,
To his son Lord Leigh the churl.

IX.

But what time she had made good all
her years of womanhood,
(Toll slowly)

Unto both these lords of Leigh spake
she out right sovrauly,
" My will runneth as my blood.

X.

" And while this same blood makes
red this same right hand's
veins," she said,
(Toll slowly)

" 'Tis my will as lady free, not to wed
a lord of Leigh,
But Sir Guy of Linteged."

XI.

The old earl he smiled smooth, then
he sighed for wilful youth,—
(Toll slowly)

" Good my niece, that hand withal
looketh somewhat soft and
small
For so large a will in sooth."

XII.

She, too, smiled by that same sign;
but her smile was cold and fine.
(Toll slowly)

" Little hand clasps muckle gold, or
it were not worth the hold
Of thy son, good uncle mine."

XIII.

Then the young lord jerked his
breath, and sware thickly in his
teeth,—
(Toll slowly)

" He would wed his own betrothed,
an she loved him an she loathed,
Let the life come, or the death."

XIV.

Up she rose with scornful eyes, as her
father's child might rise,—
(Toll slowly)

" Thy hound's blood, my Lord of
Leigh, stains thy knightly heel,"
quoth she,

" And he moans not where he lies;

XV.

" But a woman's will dies hard, in
the hall or on the sward—
(Toll slowly)

"By that grave, my lords, which
made me orphaned girl and
dowered lady,
I deny you wife and ward!"

xvi.

Unto each she bowed her head, and
swept past with lofty tread.

(Toll slowly)

Ere the midnight-bell had ceased, in
the chapel had the priest
Blessed her, bride of Linteged.

xvii.

Fast and fain the bridal train along
the night-storm rode amain:

(Toll slowly)

Hard the steeds of lord and serf struck
their hoofs out on the turf,
In the pauses of the rain.

xviii.

Fast and fain the kinsmen's train
along the storm pursued amain,

(Toll slowly)

Steed on steed-track, dashing off,—
thickening, doubling, hoof on
hoof,

In the pauses of the rain.

xix.

And the bridegroom led the flight on
his red-roan steed of might,

(Toll slowly)

And the bride lay on his arm, still, as
if she feared no harm,
Smiling out into the night.

xx.

"Dost thou fear?" he said at last.
"Nay," she answered him in
haste,—

(Toll slowly)

"Not such death as we could find:
only life with one behind.
Ride on fast as fear, ride fast!"

xxi.

Up the mountain wheeled the steed,
girth to ground, and fetlocks
spread,

(Toll slowly)

Headlong bounds, and rocking flanks,
—down he staggered, down the
banks,
To the towers of Linteged.

xxii.

High and low the serfs looked out,
red the flambeaus tossed about,

(Toll slowly)

In the courtyard rose the cry, "Live
the duchess and Sir Guy!"
But she never heard them shout.

xxiii.

On the steed she dropped her cheek,
kissed his mane, and kissed his
neck,—

(Toll slowly)

"I had happier died by thee than
lived on a Lady Leigh,"
Were the first words she did speak.

xxiv.

But a three-months' joyance lay
'twixt that moment and to-day,

(Toll slowly)

When five hundred archers tall stand
beside the castle-wall
To recapture Duchess May.

xxv.

And the castle standeth black, with
the red sun at its back;

(Toll slowly)

And a fortnight's siege is done; and,
except the duchess, none
Can misdoubt the coming wrack.

xxvi.

Then the captain, young Lord Leigh,
with his eyes so gray of blee,

(Toll slowly)

And thin lips that scarcely sheath the
cold white gnashing of his teeth,
Gnashed in smiling, absently,

xxvii.

Cried aloud, "So goes the day, bride-
groom fair of Duchess May!"

(Toll slowly)

"Look thy last upon that sun! if thou
seest to-morrow's one
'Twill be through a foot of clay.

xxviii.

"Ha, fair bride! dost hear no sound,
save that moaning of the
hound?"

(Toll slowly)

"Thou and I have parted troth; yet I
keep my vengeance-oath,
And the other may come round.

xxix.

"Ha! thy will is brave to dare, and
thy new love past compare,"
(Toll slowly)
"Yet thine old love's falsehood brave
is as strong a thing to have
As the will of lady fair.

xxx.

"Peek on blindly, netted dove! If a
wife's name thee behove,"
(Toll slowly)
"Thou shalt wear the same to-mor-
row, ere the grave has hid the
sorrow
Of thy last ill-mated love.

xxxI.

"O'er his fixed and silent mouth I'll thou
and I will call back troth,"
(Toll slowly)
"He shall altar be and priest; and he
will not cry at least,
I forbid you, I am loath!"

xxxII.

"I will wring thy fingers pale in the
gauntlet of my mail;"
(Toll slowly)
"Little hand and mickle gold 'close
shall lie within my hold,
As the sword did to prevail."

xxxIII.

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the
little birds sang west,
(Toll slowly)
Oh, and laughed the Duchess May,
and her soul did put away
All his boasting, for a jest.

xxxIV.

In her chamber did she sit, laughing
low to think of it,—
(Toll slowly)
"Tower is strong, and will is free;
thou canst boast, my Lord of
Leigh;
But thou boastest little wit."

xxxV.

In her tire-glass gazed she, and she
blushed right womanly:
(Toll slowly)
She blushed half from so disdain,
half her beauty was so plain;
"Oath for oath, my Lord of Leigh!"

xxxVI.

Straight she called her maidens in,—
"Since ye gave me blame
herein,"
(Toll slowly)
"That a bridal such as mine should
lack gauds to make it fine,
Come and shrive me from that sin.

xxxvii.

"It is three months gone to-day since
I gave mine hand away."
(Toll slowly)
"Bring the gold, and bring the gem,
we will keep bride-state in them,
While we keep the foe at bay.

xxxviii.

"On your arms I loose mine hair;
comb it smooth, and crown it
fair;"
(Toll slowly)
"I would look in purple pall from
this lattice down the wall,
And throw scorn to one that's
there!"

xxxix.

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the
little birds sang west:
(Toll slowly)
On the tower the castle's lord leant
in silence on his sword,
With an anguish in his breast.

xl.

With a spirit-laden weight did he lean
down passionate;
(Toll slowly)
They have almost sapped the wall,—
they will enter therewithal
With no knocking at the gate.

xli.

Then the sword he leant upon shiv-
ered, snapped upon the stone:
(Toll slowly)
"Sword," he thought with inward
laugh, "ill thou servest for a
staff
When thy nobler use is done!

xlii.

"Sword, thy nobler use is done!
tower is lost, and shame begun."
(Toll slowly)

" If we met them in the breach, hilt
to hilt, or speech to speech,
We should die there, each for one.

XLIII.

" If we met them at the wall, we
should singly, vainly fall;"
(Toll slowly)

" But if I die here alone,—then I die
who am but one,
And die nobly for them all.

XLIV.

" Five true friends lie, for my sake, in
the moat and in the brake;"
(Toll slowly)

" Thirteen warriors lie at rest, with a
black wound in the breast:
And not one of these will wake.

XLV.

" So, no more of this shall be. Heart-
blood weighs too heavily;"
(Toll slowly)

" And I could not sleep in grave, with
the faithful and the brave
Heaped around and over me.

XLVI.

" Since young Clare a mother hath,
and young Ralph a plighted
faith;"
(Toll slowly)

" Since my pale young sister's cheeks
blush like rose when Ronald
speaks,
Albeit never a word she saith,—

XLVII.

" These shall never die for me: life-
blood falls too heavily."
(Toll slowly)

" And if I die here apart, o'er my dead
and silent heart
They shall pass out safe and free.

XLVIII.

" When the foe hath heard it said,
'Death holds Guy of Linteged,'"
(Toll slowly)

" That new corse new peace shall
bring, and a blessed, blessed
thing
Shall the stone be at its head.

XLIX.

" Then my friends shall pass out free,
and shall bear my memory;"
(Toll slowly)

" Then my foes shall sleek their pride,
soothing fair my widowed bride,
Whose sole sin was love of me.

L.

" With their words all smooth and
sweet, they will front her, and
entreat;"
(Toll slowly)

" And their purple pall will spread
underneath her fainting head
While her tears drop over it.

LI.

" She will weep her woman's tears, she
will pray her woman's prayers;"
(Toll slowly)

" But her heart is young in pain, and
her hopes will spring again
By the suntime of her years.

LII.

" Ah, sweet May! ah, sweetest grief!
once I vowed thee my belief"
(Toll slowly)

" That thy name expressed thy sweet-
ness,—May of poets in com-
pleteness!
Now my May-day seemeth brief."

LIII.

All these silent thoughts did swim o'er
his eyes grown strange and dim,
(Toll slowly)

Till his true men in the place wished
they stood there face to face
With the foe, instead of him.

LIV.

" One last oath, my friends that wear
faithful hearts to do and dare!"
(Toll slowly)

" Tower must fall, and bride be lost;
swear me service worth the
cost!"

Bold they stood around to swear.

LV.

" Each man clasp my hand, and swear,
by the deed we failed in there,"
(Toll slowly)

" Not for vengeance, not for right, will
ye strike one blow to-night!"
Pale they stood around to swear.

LVI.

" One last boon, young Ralph and
Clare! faithful hearts to do and
dare!"

(Toll slowly)

" Bring that steed up from his stall,
which she kissed before you all,
Guide him up the turret-stair.

LVII.

" Ye shall harness him aright, and
lead upward to this height;"

(Toll slowly)

" Once in love, and twice in war, hath
he borne me strong and far:
He shall bear me far to-night!"

LVIII.

Then his men looked to and fro when
they heard him speaking so,

(Toll slowly)

" 'Las! the noble heart,' they
thought: "he, in sooth, is grief-
distraught;
Would we stood here with the foe!"

LIX.

But a fire flashed from his eye 'twixt
their thought and their reply,—

(Toll slowly)

" Have ye so much time to waste?
We who ride here must ride
fast
As we wish our foes to fly."

LX.

They have fetched the steed with
care, in the harness he did wear,
(Toll slowly)

Past the court, and through the doors,
across the rushes of the floors;
But they goad him up the stair.

LXI.

Then, from out her bower chamb're,
did the Duchessa May repair:
(Toll slowly)

" Tell me now what is your need,"
said the lady, "of this steed,
That ye goad him up the stair?"

LXII.
Calm she stood; unbodkined through
fell her dark hair to her shoe;
(Toll slowly)
And the smile upon her face, ere she
left the tiring-glass,
Had not time enough to go.

LXIII.

" Get thee back, sweet Duchessa May!
hope is gone like yesterday!"

(Toll slowly)

" One half-hour completes the breach;
and thy lord grows wild of
speech—
Get thee in, sweet lady, and pray!

LXIV.

" In the east tower, high'st of all,
loud he cries for steed from
stall:"

(Toll slowly)

" He would ride as far," quoth he,
"as for love and victory,
Though he rides the castle-wall."

LXV.

" And we fetch the steed from stall,
up where never a hoof did
fall"—

(Toll slowly)

" Wifely prayer meets deathly need:
may the sweet heavens hear
thee plead
If he rides the castle-wall!"

LXVI.

Low she dropt her head, and lower,
till her hair coiled on the floor,
(Toll slowly)

And tear after tear you heard fall dis-
tinct as any word
Which you might be listening for.

LXVII.

" Get thee in, thou soft ladye! here
is never a place for thee!"

(Toll slowly)

" Braid thine hair, and clasp thy gown,
that thy beauty in its moan
May find grace with Leigh of
Leigh."

LXVIII.

She stood up in bitter case, with a
pale yet steady face,
(Toll slowly)

Like a statue thunderstruck, which,
though quivering, seems to look
Right against the thunder-place.

LXIX.

And her foot trod in with pride her
own tears i' the stone beside:
(Toll slowly)

" Go to, faithful friends, go to ! judge
no more what ladies do,
No, nor how their lords may ride ! "

LXX.

Then the good steed's rein she took,
and his neck did kiss and stroke:
(Toll slowly)

Soft he neighed to answer her, and
then followed up the stair
For the love of her sweet look.

LXXI.

Oh, and steeply, steeply wound up
the narrow stair around,
(Toll slowly)

Oh, and closely, closely speeding,
step by step beside her treading,
Did he follow, meek as hound.

LXXII.

On the east tower, high'st of all,—
there, where never a hoof did
fall,—
(Toll slowly)

Out they swept, a vision steady, noble
steed and lovely lady,
Calm as if in bower or stall.

LXXIII.

Down she knelt at her lord's knee,
and she looked up silently,
(Toll slowly)

And he kissed her twice and thrice,
for that look within her eyes
Which he could not bear to see.

LXXIV.

Quoth he, " Get th^ee from this strife,
and the sweet saints bless thy
life ! "
(Toll slowly)

" In this hour I stand in need of my
noble red-roan steed,
But no more of my noble wife."

LXXXV.

Quoth she, " Meekly have I done all
thy biddings under sun;"
(Toll slowly)

" But by all my womanhood, which
is proved so, true and good,
I will never do this one.

LXXVI.

" Now by womanhood's decree and
by wifehood's verity,"
(Toll slowly)

" In this hour, if thou hast need of thy
noble red-roan steed,
Thou hast also need of me.

LXXVII.

" By this golden ring ye see on this
lifted hand pardie,"
(Toll slowly)

" If this hour, on castle-wall can be
room for steed from stall,
Shall be also room for me."
(Toll slowly)

LXXVIII.

" So the sweet saints with me be ! "
(did she utter solemnly)
(Toll slowly)

" If a man, this eventide, on this cas-
tle-wall will ride,
He shall ride the same with me."
(Toll slowly)

LXXIX.

Oh, he sprang up in the selle, and he
laughed out bitter-well,—
(Toll slowly)

" Wouldst thou ride among the leaves,
as we used on other eves,
To hear chime a vesper-bell ? "

LXXX.

She clung closer to his knee—" Ay,
beneath the cypress-tree!"
(Toll slowly)

" Mock me not; for otherwhere than
along the greenwood fair
Have I ridden fast with thee.

LXXXI.

" Fast I rode with new-made vows
from my angry kinsman's
house;"
(Toll slowly)

" What ! and would you men should
reck that I dared more for love's
sake
As a bride than as a spouse ?

LXXXIII.

"What! and would you it should fall,
as a proverb, before all,"
(Toll slowly)
"That a bride may keep your side
while through castle-gate you
ride,
Yet eschew the castle-wall?"

LXXXIV.

Hol the breach yawns into ruin, and
roars up against her suing,
(Toll slowly)
With the inarticulate din, and the
dreadful falling-in—
Shrieks of doing and undoing!

LXXXV.

Twice he wrung her hands in twain;
but the small hands closed
again.
(Toll slowly)
Back he reined the steed—back,
back! but she trailed along his
track
With a frantic clasp and strain.

LXXXVI.

Evermore the foemen pour through
the crash of window and door,
(Toll slowly)
And the shouts of Leigh and Leigh,
and the shrieks of "Kill!" and
"Flee!"
Strike up clear amid the roar.

LXXXVII.

Thrice he wrung her hands in twain;
but they closed and clung again,
(Toll slowly)
While she clung, as one, withheld,
clasps a Christ upon the rood,
In a spasm of deathly pain.

LXXXVIII.

She clung wild, and she clung mute,
with her shuddering lips half-
shut;
(Toll slowly)
Her head fallen as half in swoon,
hair and knee swept on the
ground,
She clung wild to stirrup and foot.

LXXXVIII.

Back he reined his steed back-thrown
on the slippery coping-stone;
(Toll slowly)
Back the iron hoofs did grind on the
battlement behind,
Whence a hundred feet went down;

LXXXIX.

And his heel did press and goad on
the quivering flank bestrode,—
(Toll slowly)
"Friends and brothers, save my wife!
Pardon, sweet, in change for
life;
But I ride alone to God."

XC.

Straight, as if the holy name had up-
breathed her like a flame,
(Toll slowly)
She upsprang, she rose upright, in his
selle she sat in sight.
By her love she overcame.

XCI.

And her head was on his breast, where
she smiled as one at rest,—
(Toll slowly)
"Ring," she cried, "O vesper-bell, in
the beechwood's old chapelle,
But the passing-bell rings best!"

XCII.

They have caught out at the rein which
Sir Guy threw loose, in vain;
(Toll slowly)
For the horse, in stark despair, with
his front hoofs poised in air,
On the last verge rears amain.

XCIII.

Now he hangs, he rocks between, and
his nostrils curdle in;
(Toll slowly)
Now he shivers head and hoof, and
the flakes of foam fall off,
And his face grows fierce and thin;

XCIV.

And a look of human woe from his
staring eyes did go;
(Toll slowly)
And a sharp cry uttered he, in a fore-
told agony
Of the headlong death below;

XCV.

And, "Ring, ring, thou passing-bell,"
still she cried, "i' the old chappelle!"

(Toll slowly)

Then back-toppling, crashing back, a
dead weight flung out to wrack,
Horse and riders overfell.

I.

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the
little birds sang west,
(Toll slowly)

And I read this ancient Rhyme in the
churchyard, while the chime
Slowly tolled for one at rest.

II.

The abeles moved in the sun, and the
river smooth did run,
(Toll slowly)

And the ancient Rhyme rang strange,
with its passion and its change,
Here, where all done lay undone.

III.

And beneath a willow-tree I a little
grave did see,
(Toll slowly)

Where was graved, "HERE UNDE-
FILED, LIETH MAUD, A THREE-
YEAR CHILD,
EIGHTEEN HUNDRED, FORTY-THREE.

IV.

Then, O spirits, did I say, ye who rode
so fast that day,
(Toll slowly)

Did star-wheels and angel-wings, with
their holy winnowings,
Keep beside you all the way?

V.

Though in passion ye would dash with
a blind and heavy crash,
(Toll slowly)

Up against the thick-bossed shield of
God's judgment in the field,—
Though your heart and brain were
rash, —

VI.

Now your will is all unwilling, now
your pulses are all stilled,
(Toll slowly)

Now ye lie as meek and mild (where-
so laid) as Maud, the child
Whose small grave was lately filled.

VII.

Beating heart and burning brow, ye
are very patient now,
(Toll slowly)

And the children might be bold to
pluck the kingcups from your
mould,
Ere a month had let them grow.

VIII.

And you let the goldfinch sing, in the
alder near in spring.—
(Toll slowly)

Let her build her nest, and sit all the
three weeks out on it,
Murmuring not at any thing.

IX.

In your patience ye are strong; cold
and heat ye take not wrong:
(Toll slowly)

When the trumpet of the angel blows
eternity's evangel,
Time will seem to you not long.

X.

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the
little birds sang west,
(Toll slowly)

And I said in under-breath, "All our
life is mixed with death,
And who knoweth which is best?"

XI.

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the
little birds sang west,
(Toll slowly)

And I smiled to think God's greatness
flowed around our incomple-
ness, —
Round our restlessness, his rest.

THE ROMANCE OF THE SWAN'S NEST.

"So the dreams depart,
So the fading phantoms flee,
And the sharp reality
Now must act its part."

WESTWOOD'S *Beads from a Rosary*.

I.

LITTLE Ellie sits alone
'Mid the beeches of a meadow,
By a stream-side on the grass,
And the trees are showering down
Doubles of their leaves in shadow,
On her shining hair and face.

II.

She has thrown her bonnet by,
And her feet she has been dipping
In the shallow water's flow;
Now she holds them nakedly
In her hands, all sleek and dripping,
While she rocketh to and fro.

III.

Little Ellie sits alone,
And the smile she softly uses
Fills the silence like a speech,
While she thinks what shall be done,
And the sweetest pleasure chooses
For her future within reach.

IV.

Little Ellie in her smile
Chooses, "I will have a lover,
Riding on a steed of steeds:
He shall love me without guile,
And to him I will discover
The swan's nest among the reeds.

V.

"And the steed shall be red-roan,
And the lover shall be noble,
With an eye that takes the breath.
And the lute he plays upon
Shall strike ladies into trouble,
As his sword strikes men to death.

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VI.

"And the steed it shall be shod
All in silver, housed in azure;
And the mane shall swim the
wind;
And the hoofs along the sod
Shall flash onward, and keep meas-
ure,
Till the shepherds look behind.

VII.

"But my lover will not prize
All the glory that he rides in,
When he gazes in my face.
He will say, 'O Love, thine eyes
Build the shrine my soul abides in,
And I kneel here for thy grace!'

VIII.

"Then, ay, then he shall kneel low,
With the red-roan steed anear him,
Which shall seem to understand,
Till I answer, 'Rise and go!
For the world must love and fear
him
Whom I gift with heart and hand.'

IX.

"Then he will arise so pale,
I shall feel my own lips tremble
With a yes I must not say:
Nathless maiden-brave, 'Farewell,'
I will utter, and dissemble —
'Light to-morrow with to-day!'

X.

"Then he'll ride among the hills
To the wide world past the river,
There to put away all wrong,
To make straight distorted wills,
And to empty the broad quiver
Which the wicked bear along.

xii.

"Three times shall a young foot-page
Swim the stream, and climb the
mountain,
And kneel down beside my feet:
'Lo! my master sends this gage,
Lady, for thy pity's counting.
What wilt thou exchange for it?'

xiii.

"And the first time I will send
A white rosebud for a guerdon:
And the second time, a glove;
But the third time I may bend
From my pride, and answer,—
'Pardon,
If he comes to take my love.'

xiv.

"Then the young foot-page will run;
Then my lover will ride faster,
Till he kneeleth at my knee:
'I am a duke's eldest son,
Thousand serfs do call me master,
But, O Love, I love but *thee*!'

xv.

"He will kiss me on the mouth
Then, and lead me as a lover
Through the crowds that praise
his deeds.

And, when soul-tied by one troth,
Unto *him* I will discover
That swan's nest among the
reeds."

xvi.

Little Ellie, with her smile
Not yet ended, rose up gayly,
Tied the bonnet, donned the shoe,
And went homeward, round a mile,
Just to see, as she did daily,
What more eggs were with the
two.

xvii.

Pushing through the elm-tree copse,
Winding up the stream, light-
hearted,
Where the osier pathway leads,
Past the boughs she stoops, and stops.
Lo, the wild swan had deserted,
And a rat had gnawed the reeds!

xviii.

Ellie went home sad and slow.
If she found the lover ever,
With his red-roan steed of steeds,
Sooth I know not; but I know
She could never show him — never,
That swan's nest among the reeds.

BERTHA IN THE LANE.

i.

Put the broidery-frame away,
For my sewing is all done:
The last thread is used to-day,
And I need not join it on.
Though the clock stands at the noon,
I am weary. I have sewn,
Sweet, for thee, a wedding-gown.

ii.

Sister, help me to the bed,
And stand near me, dearest sweet.
Do not shrink, nor be afraid,
Blushing with a sudden heat!

No one standeth in the street?
By God's love I go to meet,
Love I thee with love complete.

iii.

Lean thy face down; drop it in
These two hands, that I may
hold
"Twixt their palms thy cheek and
chin,
Stroking back the curls of gold:
'Tis a fair, fair face, in sooth —
Larger eyes and redder mouth
Than mine were in my first youth.

IV.

Thou art younger by seven years —
Ah ! so bashful at my gaze,
That the lashes, hung with tears,
Grow too heavy to upraise ?
I would wound thee by no touch
Which thy shyness feels as such.
Dost thou mind me, dear, so much ?

V.

Have I not been nigh a mother
To thy sweetnes ? — tell me, dear;
Have we not loved one another
Tenderly, from year to year,
Since our dying mother mild
Said, with accents undefiled,
" Child, be mother to this child " ?

VI.

Mother, mother, up in heaven,
Stand up on the jasper sea,
And be witness I have given
All the gifts required of me, —
Hope that blessed me, bliss that
crowned,
Love that left me with a wound,
Life itself that turneth round.

VII.

Mother, mother, thou art kind,
Thou art standing in the room,
In a molten glory shrined,
That rays off into the gloom ;
But thy smile is bright and bleak
Like cold waves : I cannot speak,
I sob in it, and grow weak.

VIII.

Ghostly mother, keep aloof
One hour longer from my soul ;
For I still am thinking of
Earth's warm-beating joy and dole !
On my finger is a ring
Which I still see glittering
When the night hides every thing.

IX.

Little sister, thou art pale !
Ah, I have a wandering brain, —
But I lose that fever-bale,
And my thoughts grow calm again.
Lean down closer, closer still :
I have words thine ear to fill,
And would kiss thee at my will.

X.

Dear, I heard thee in the spring, —
Thee and Robert, — through the
trees, —
When we all went gathering
Boughs of May-bloom for the bees.
Do not start so ! think instead
How the sunshine overhead
Seemed to trickle through the shade.

XI.

What a day it was that day !
Hills and vales did openly
Seem to heave, and throng away
At the sight of the great sky ;
And the silence, as it stood
In the glory's golden flood,
Audibly did bud, and bud.

XII.

Through the winding hedgerows
green
How we wandered, I and you,
With the bowery tops shut in,
And the gates that showed the
view !
How we talked there: thrushes soft
Sang our praises out, or oft
Bleating took them from the croft;

XIII.

Till the pleasure, grown too strong,
Left me muter evermore,
And, the winding road being long,
I walked out of sight, before,
And so, wrapt in musings fond,
Issued (past the wayside pond)
On the meadow-lands beyond.

XIV.

I sate down beneath the beech
Which leans over to the lane,
And the far sound of your speech
Did not promise any pain ;
And I blessed you full and free,
With a smile stooped tenderly
O'er the May-flowers on my knee.

XV.

But the sound grew into word
As the speakers drew more near —
Sweet, forgive me that I heard
What you wished me not to hear.
Do not weep so, do not shake;
Oh, I heard thee, Bertha, make
Good true answers for my sake.

xvi.

Yes, and HE too ! let him stand
In thy thoughts untouched by
blame.
Could he help it, if my hand
He had claimed with hasty claim ?
That was wrong, perhaps; but then
Such things be — and will again.
Women cannot judge for men.

xvii.

Had he seen thee when he swore
He would love but me alone ?
Thou wast absent, sent before
To our kin in Sidmouth town.
When he saw thee, who art best
Past compare, and loveliest,
He but judged thee as the rest.

xviii.

Could we blame him with grave
words,
Thou and I, dear, if we might ?
Thy brown eyes have looks like birds
Flying straightway to the light:
Mine are older. Hush ! Look out —
Up the street ! Is none without ?
How the poplar swings about !

xix.

And that hour, beneath the beech,
When I listened in a dream,
And he said in his deep speech
That he owed me all *(steem)*, —
Each word swam in on my brain
With a dim, dilating pain,
Till it burst with that last strain.

xx.

I fell flooded with a dark,
In the silence of a swoon.
When I rose, still cold and stark,
There was eight; I saw the moon:
And the stars each in its place,
And the May-blooms on the grass,
Seemed to wonder what I was.

xxi.

And I walked as if apart
From myself, when I could stand;
And I pitied my own heart,
As if I held it in my hand,
Somewhat coldly, with a sense
Of fulfilled benevolence,
And a "poor thing" negligence.

xxii.

And I answered coldly, too,
When you met me at the door;
And I only *heard* the dew
Dripping from me to the floor;
And the flowers I bade you see
Were too withered for the bee,
As my life henceforth for me.

xxiii.

Do not weep so, dear — heart-warm !
All was best as it befell.
If I say he did me harm,
I speak wild — I am not well.
All his words were kind and good —
He esteemed me. Only, blood
Runs so faint in womanhood !

xxiv.

Then I always was too grave,
Liked the saddest ballad sung, —
With that look, besides, we have
In our faces, who die young.
I had died, dear, all the same:
Life's long, joyous, jostling game
Is too loud for my meek shame.

xxv.

We are so unlike each other,
Thou and I, that none could guess
We were children of one mother,
But for mutual tenderness.
Thou art rose-lined from the cold,
And meant verily to hold
Life's pure pleasures manifold.

xxvi.

I am pale as crocus grows
Close beside a rose-tree's root:
Whoso'er would reach the rose
Treads the crocus under foot.
I, like May-bloom on thorn-tree,
Thou, like merry summer-bee, —
Fit that I be plucked for thee !

xxvii.

Yet who plucks me ? No one mourns,
I have lived my season out,
And now die of my own thorns
Which I could not live without.
Sweet, be merry ! How the light
Comes and goes ! If it be night,
Keep the candles in my sight.

XXVIII.

Are there footsteps at the door?
Look out quickly. Yea, or nay?
Some one might be waiting for
Some last word that I might say.
Nay? So best! so angels would
Stand off clear from deathly road,
Not to cross the sight of God.

XXIX.

Colder grow my hands and feet.
When I wear the shroud I made,
Let the folds lie straight and neat,
And the rosemary be spread,
That, if any friend should come,
(To see *thee*, sweet), all the room
May be lifted out of gloom.

XXX.

And, dear Bertha, let me keep
On my hand this little ring,
Which at nights, when others sleep,
I can still see glittering.
Let me wear it out of sight,
In the grave, where it will light
All the dark up, day and night.

XXXI.

On that grave drop not a tear!
Else, though fathom-deep the place,
Through the woollen shroud I wear
I shall feel it on my face.

Rather smile there, blessed one,
Thinking of me in the sun,
Or forget me,—smiling on!

XXXII.

Art thou near me? Nearer! so—
Kiss me close upon the eyes,
That the earthly light may go
Sweetly, as it used to rise
When I watched the morning-gray
Strike, betwixt the hills, the way
He was sure to come that day.

XXXIII.

So—no more vain words be said!
The hosannas nearer roll.
Mother, smile now on thy dead,
I am death-strong in my soul.
Mystic Dove alit on cross,
Guide the poor bird of the snows
Through the snow-wind above loss!

XXXIV.

Jesus, Victim, comprehending
Love's divine self-abnegation,
Cleanse my love in its self-spending,
And absorb the poor libation!
Wind my thread of life up higher,
Up, through angels' hands of fire!
I aspire while I expire.

LADY GERALDINE'S COURTSHIP.

A ROMANCE OF THE AGE.

A poet writes to his friend. PLACE.—A room in Wycombe Hall. TIME.—Late in the evening.

I.

DEAR my friend and fellow-student, I
would lean my spirit o'er you!
Down the purple of this chamber
tears should scarcely run at
will.

I am humbled who was humble.
Friend, I bow my head before
you;
You should lead me to my peasants;
but their faces are too still.

II.

There's a lady, an earl's daughter,—
she is proud and she is noble,
And she treads the crimson carpet,

and she breathes the perfumed air,
And a kingly blood sends glances up,
her princely eye to trouble,
And the shadow of a monarch's crown is softened in her hair.

III.

She has halls among the woodlands,
she has castles by the breakers,
She has farms and she has manors,
she can threaten and command,
And the palpitating engines snort in steam across her acres,
As they mark upon the blasted heaven
the measure of the land.

IV.

There are none of England's daughters who can show a prouder presence;
Upon princely suitors praying, she has looked in her disdain.
She was sprung of English nobles, I was born of English peasants:
What was *I* that I should love her,
save for competence to pain !

V.

I was only a poor poet, made for singing at her casement,
As the finches or the thrushes, while she thought of other things.
Oh, she walked so high above me, she appeared to my abasement,
In her lovely silken murmur, like an angel clad in wings !

VI.

Many vassals bow before her as her carriage sweeps their doorways;
She has blest their little children, as a priest or queen were she;
Far too tender, or too cruel far, her smile upon the poor was,
For I thought it was the same smile which she used to smile on *me*.

VII.

She has voters in the commons, she has lovers in the palace,
And of all the fair court-ladies, few have jewels half as fine;

Oft the prince has named her beauty 'twixt the red wine and the chalice:
Oh, and what was *I* to love her? my beloved, my Geraldine !

VIII.

Yet I could not choose but love her:
I was born to poet-uses,—
To love all things set above me, all of good and all of fair.
Nymphs of mountain, not of valley,
we are wont to call the Muses;
And, in nympholeptic climbing, poets pass from mount to star.

IX.

And because I was a poet, and because the public praised me,
With a critical deduction for the modern writer's fault,
I could sit at rich men's tables, though the courtesies that raised me
Still suggested clear between us the pale spectrum of the salt.

X.

And they praised me in her presence:
"Will your book appear this summer?"
Then, returning to each other — "Yes, our plans are for the moors;"
Then, with whisper dropped behind me — "There he is! the latest comer.
Oh, she only likes his verses! what is over, she endures.

XI.

"Quite low-born, self-educated! somewhat gifted, though, by nature, And we make a point of asking him, — of being very kind.
You may speak, he does not hear you; and, besides, he writes no satire: All these serpents kept by charmers leave the natural sting behind."

XII.

I grew scornfuller, grew colder, as I stood up there among them, Till, as frost intense will burn you, the cold scorning scorched my brow; When a sudden silver speaking, gravely cadenced, over-rung them, And a sudden silken stirring touched my inner nature through.

XIII.

I looked upward and beheld her: with a calm and regnant spirit, Slowly round she swept her eyelids, and said clear before them all, "Have you such superfluous honor, sir, that, able to confer it, You will come down, Mister Bertram, as my guest to Wycombe Hall?"

XIV.

Here she paused: she had been paler at the first word of her speaking. But, because a silence followed it, blushed somewhat, as for shame. Then, as scorning her own feeling, resumed calmly, "I am seeking More distinction than these gentlemen think worthy of my claim.

XV.

"Ne'ertheless, you see, I seek it; not because I am a woman." (Here her smile sprang like a fountain, and so, overflowed her mouth), "But because my woods in Sussex have some purple shades at gloaming Which are worthy of a king in state, or poet in his youth.

XVI.

"I invite you, Mister Bertram, to no scene for worldly speeches,— Sir, I scarce should dare,—but only where God asked the thrushes first; And if you will sing beside them, in the covert of my beeches, I will thank you for the woodlands, for the human world at worst."

XVII.

Then she smiled around right childly, then she gazed around right queenly, And I bowed—I could not answer; alternated light and gloom, While, as one who quells the lions, with a steady eye, serenely, She, with level, fronting eyelids, passed out stately from the room.

XVIII.

Oh the blessed woods of Sussex! I can hear them still around me, With their leafy tide of greenery still rippling up the wind. Oh the cursed woods of Sussex! where the hunter's arrow found me When a fair face and a tender voice had made me mad and blind!

XIX.

In that ancient hall of Wycombe thronged the numerous guests invited, And the lovely London ladies trod the floors with gliding feet; And their voices, low with fashion, not with feeling, softly freighted All the air about the windows with elastic laughers sweet.

XX.

For at eve the open windows flung their light out on the terrace, Which the floating orbs of curtains did with gradual shadow sweep, While the swans upon the river, fed at morning by the heiress, Trembled downward through their snowy wings at music in their sleep.

XXI.

And there evermore was music, both of instrument and singing, Till the finches of the shrubberies grew restless in the dark; But the cedars stood up motionless, each in a moonlight-ring, And the deer, half in the glimmer, strewed the hollows of the park.

XXII.

And though sometimes she would bind me with her silver-corded speeches To commix my words and laughter with the converse and the jest, Oft I sat apart, and, gazing on the river through the beeches, Heard, as pure the swans swam down it, her pure voice o'erfloat the rest.

XXIII.

In the morning, horn of huntsman,
hoof of steed, and laugh of rider,
Spread out cheery from the courtyard
till we lost them in the hills;
While herself and other ladies, and
her suitors left beside her,
Went a-wandering up the gardens,
through the laurels and abeles.

XXIV.

Thus, her foot upon the new-mown
grass, bareheaded, with the
flowing
Of the virginal white vesture gath-
ered closely to her throat,
And the golden ringlets in her neck
just quickened by her going,
And appearing to breathe sun for air,
and doubting if to float,—

XXV.

With a bunch of dewy maple which
her right hand held above her.
And which trembled, a green shadow,
in betwixt her and the skies,
As she turned her face in going, thus,
she drew me on to love her,
And to worship the divineness of the
smile hid in her eyes.

XXVI.

For her eyes alone smile constantly;
her lips have serious sweetnes,
And her front is calm; the dimple
rarely ripples on the cheek;
But her deep blue eyes constant-
ly, as if they in discreetness
Kept the secret of a happy dream she
did not care to speak.

XXVII.

Thus she drew me, the first morning,
out across into the garden,
And I walked among her noble
friends, and could not keep be-
hind.
Spake she unto all and unto me, "Be-
hold, I am the warden
Of the song-birds in these lindens,
which are cages to their mind.

XXVIII.

" But within this swarded circle into
which the lime-walk brings us,
Whence the beeches, rounded greenly,
stand away in reverent fear,

I will let no music enter, saving what
the fountain sings us,
Which the lilies round the basin may
seem pure enough to hear.

XXIX.

" The live air that waves the lilies
waves the slender jet of water,
Like a holy thought sent feebly up
from soul of fasting saint:
Whereby lies a marble Silence sleep-
ing (Lough the sculptor wrought
her.)
So asleep she is forgetting to say
' Hush! ' — a fancy quaint.

XXX.

" Mark how heavy white her eyelids!
not a dream between them lin-
gers;
And the left hand's index droppeth
from the lips upon the cheek;
While the right hand, with the sym-
bol-rose held slack within the
fingers,
Has fallen backward in the basin,—
yet this Silence will not speak!

XXXI.

" That the essential meaning growing
may exceed the special symbol,
Is the thought as I conceive it: it ap-
plies more high and low.
Our true noblemen will often through
right nobleness grow humble,
And assert an inward honor by deny-
ing outward show."

XXXII.

" Nay, your Silence," said I, " truly,
holds her symbol-rose, but
slackly;
Yet she holds it, or would scarcely be
a Silence to our ken:
And your nobles wear their ermine
on the outside, or walk blackly
In the presence of the social law as
mere ignoble men.

XXXIII.

" Let the poets dream such dreaming!
madam, in these British islands!
'Tis the substance that wanes ever,
'tis the symbol that exceeds.

Soon we shall have nought but symbol; and, for statues like this Silence,
Shall accept the rose's image—in another case, the weed's."

XXXIV.

"Not so quickly," she retorted: "I confess, where'er you go, you find for things, names—shows for actions, and pure gold for honor clear; But, when all is run to symbol in the social, I will throw you The world's book which now reads dryly, and sit down with Silence here."

XXXV.

Half in playfulness she spoke, I thought, and half in indignation: Friends who listened, laughed her words off, while her lovers deemed her fair,— A fair woman, flushed with feeling, in her noble-lighted station Near the statue's white reposing and both bathed in sunny air!

XXXVI.

With the trees round, not so distant but you heard their vernal murmur, And beheld in light and shadow the leaves in and outward move, And the little fountain leaping toward the sun-heart to be warmer, Then recoiling in a tremble from the too much light above.

XXXVII.

'Tis a picture for remembrance. And thus, morning after morning, Did I follow as she drew me by the spirit to her feet. Why, her greyhound followed also! dogs we both were dogs for scorning— To be sent back when she pleased it and her path lay through the wheat.

XXXVIII.

And thus, morning after morning, spite of vows, and spite of sorrow, Did I follow at her drawing, while the week-days passed along,

Just to feed the swans this noon tide, or to see the fawns to-morrow, Or to teach the hillside echo some sweet Tuscan in a song.

XXXIX.

Ay; for sometimes on the hillside, while we sate down in the gowans, With the forest green behind us, and its shadow cast before, And the river running under, and across it, from the rowans, A brown partridge whirring near us till we felt the air it bore,—

XL.

There, obedient to her praying, did I read aloud the poems Made to Tuscan flutes, or instruments more various of our own; Read the pastoral parts of Spenser, or the subtle interflowings Found in Petrarch's sonnets — here's the book, the leaf is folded down!

XLI.

Or at times a modern volume, Wordsworth's solemn-thoughted idyl, Howitt's ballad-verse, or Tennyson's enchanted reverie, Or from Browning some "Pomegranate," which, if cut deep down the middle, Shows a heart within blood-tinctured, of a veined humanity.

XLII.

Or at times I read there hoarsely some new poem of my making: Poets ever fail in reading their own verses to their worth; For the echo in you breaks upon the words which you are speaking, And the chariot-wheels jar in the gate through which you drive them forth.

XLIII.

After, when we were grown tired of books, the silence round us flinging A slow arm of sweet compression, felt with beatings at the breast, She would break out on a sudden in a gush of woodland singing, Like a child's emotion in a god,— a naiad tired of rest.

XLIV.

Oh to see or hear her singing! scarce
I know which is divinest,
For her looks sing too—she modu-
lates her gestures on the tune,
And her mouth stirs with the song,
like song; and, when the notes
are finest,
'Tis the eyes that shoot out vocal
light, and seem to swell them
on.

XLV.

Then we talked—oh, how we talked!
her voice, so cadenced in the
talking,
Made another singing—of the soul!
a music without bars:
While the leafy sounds of woodlands,
humming round where we were
walking,
Brought interposition worthy-sweet,
as skies about the stars.

XLVI.

And she spake such good thoughts
natural, as if she alvays thought
them;
She had sympathies so rapid, open,
free as bird on branch,
Just as ready to fly east as west,
whichever way besought them,
In the birchen-wood a chirrup, or a
cock-crow in the grange.

XLVII.

In her utmost lightness there is truth,
and often she speaks lightly,
Has a grace in being gay which even
mournful souls approve;
For the root of some grave earnest
thought is understruck so right-
ly
As to justify the foliage and the wav-
ing flowers above.

XLVIII.

And she talked on—we talked, rather!
upon all things,—substance,
shadow,
Of the sheep that browsed the grasses,
of the reapers in the corn,
Of the little children from the schools,
seen winding through the mead-
ow,
Of the poor rich world beyond them,
still kept poorer by its scorn.

XLIX.

So of men, and so, of letters—books
are men of higher stature,
And the only men that speak aloud
for future times to hear;
So, of mankind in the abstract, which
grows slowly into nature.
Yet will lift the cry of "progress," as
it trod from sphere to sphere.

L.

And her custom was to praise me
when I said, "The age calls sim-
ples,
With a broad clown's back turned
broadly to the glory of the stars.
We are gods by our own reck'ning,
and may well shut up the tem-
ples,
And wield on, amid the incense-
steam, the thunder of our ears.

LI.

"For we throw out acclamations of
self-thanking, self-admiring,
With, at every mile run faster, 'Oh
the wondrous, wondrous age!'
Little thinking if we work our souls
as nobly as our iron,
Or if angels will command us at the
goal of pilgrimage.

LII.

"Why, what is this patient entrance
into Nature's deep resources
But the child's most gradual learning
to walk upright without bane?
When we drive out from the cloud of
steam majestic white horses,
Are we greater than the first men
who led black ones by the mane?

LIII.

"If we trod the deeps of ocean, if we
struck the stars in rising,
If we wrapped the globe intensely
with one hot electric breath,
'Twere but power within our tether,
No new spirit-power comprising,
And in life we were not greater men,
nor bolder men in death."

LIV.

She was patient with my talking; and
I loved her, loved her certes
As I loved all heavenly objects, with
uplifted eyes and hands;

**As I loved pure inspirations, loved
the graces, loved the virtues,
In a Love content with writing his
own name on desert sands.**

LV.

**Or at least I thought so, purely;
thought no idiot hope was rais-
ing
Any crown to crown Love's silence,
silent Love that sate alone.
Out, alas! the stag is like me,—he
that tries to go on grazing
With the great deep gun-wound in
his neck, then reels with sud-
den moan.**

LVI.

**It was thus I reeled. I told you that
her hand had many suitors;
But she smiles them down imperially,
as Venus did the waves,
And with such a gracious coldness,
that they cannot press their fu-
tures
On the present of her courtesy, which
yieldingly enslaves.**

LVII.

**And this morning, as I sat alone with-
in the inner chamber
With the great saloon beyond it, lost
in pleasant thought serene,
For I had been reading Camoens,
that poem, you remember,
Which his lady's eyes are praised in
as the sweetest ever seen.**

LVIII.

**And the book lay open; and my
thought flew from it, taking
from it
A vibration and impulsion to an end
beyond its own,
As the branch of a green osier, when
a child would overcome it,
Springs up freely from his clasplings,
and goes swinging in the sun.**

LIX.

**As I mused I heard a murmur: it
grew deep as it grew longer,
Speakers using earnest language—
“Lady Geraldine, you *would!*”
And I heard a voice that pleaded
ever on in accents stronger,
As a sense of reason gave it power to
make its rhetoric good.**

LX.
Well I knew that voice: it was an
earl's, of soul that matched his
station,—

**Soul completed into lordship, might
and right read on his brow;
Very finely courteous: far too proud
to doubt his domination
Of the common people, he atones for
grandeur by a bow.**

LXI.

**High straight forehead, nose of eagle,
cold blue eyes of less expression
Than resistance, coldly casting off
the looks of other men,
As steel, arrows; unelastic lips, which
seem to taste possession,
And be cautious lest the common air
should injure or distract.**

LXII.

**For the rest, accomplished, upright,
ay, and standing by his order
With a bearing not ungraceful; fond
of art and letters too;
Just a good man made a proud man,
—as the sandy rocks that border
A wild coast, by circumstances, in a
regnant ebb and flow.**

LXIII.

**Thus, I knew that voice, I heard it,
and I could not help the heark-
ening:
In the room I stood up blindly, and
my burning heart within
Seemed to seethe and fuse my senses
till they ran on all sides dark-
ening,
And scorched, weighed like melted
metal round my feet that stood
therein.**

LXIV.

**And that voice, I heard it pleading,
for love's sake, for wealth, posi-
tion,
For the sake of liberal uses, and great
actions to be done—
And she interrupted gently, “Nay,
my lord, the old tradition
Of your Normans, by some worthier
hand than mine is, should be
won.”**

LXV.

"Ah, that white hand!" he said quickly; and in his he either drew it
Or attempted, for with gravity and instance she replied,
"Nay, indeed, my lord, this talk is vain, and we had best eschew it,
And pass on, like friends, to other points less easy to decide."

LXVI.

What he said again, I know not: it is likely that his trouble Worked his pride up to the surface, for she answered in slow scorn, "And your lordship judges rightly. Whom I marry, shall be noble, Ay, and wealthy. I shall never blush to think how he was born."

LXVII.

There I maddened. Her words stung me. Life swept through me into fever, And my soul sprang up astonished,— sprang full-statured in an hour Know you what it is when anguish with apocalyptic NEVER To a Pythian height dilates you, and despair sublimes to power?

LXVIII.

From my brain the soul-wings budded, waved a flame about my body, Whence conventions coiled to ashes. I felt self-drawn out, as man, From amalgamate false natures, and I saw the skies grow ruddy With the deepening feet of angels, and I knew what spirits can.

LXIX.

I was mad, inspired, say either! (anguish worketh inspiration) Was a man or beast— perhaps so, for the tiger roars when speared; And I walked on step by step along the level of my passion— Oh my soul! and passed the doorway to her face, and never feared.

LXX.

He had left her, peradventure, when my footstep proved my coming; But for her—she half arose, then sate, grew scarlet, and grew pale. Oh, she trembled! 'tis so always with a worldly man or woman In the presence of true spirits: what else can they do but quail?

LXXI.

Oh! she fluttered like a tame bird in among its forest brothers Far too strong for it; then drooping, bowed her face upon her hands; And I spake out wildly, fiercely, brutal truths of her and others: I, she planted in the desert, swathed her, windlike, with my sands.

LXXII.

I plucked up her social fictions, bloody-rooted, though leaf-verdant, Trod them down with words of shamming,— all the purple and the gold, All the "landed stakes" and lordships,— all that spirits pure and ardent Are cast out of love and honor because chancing not to hold.

LXXIII.

"For myself I do not argue," said I, "though I love you, madam, But for better souls that nearer to the height of yours have trod: And this age shows, to my thinking, still more infidels to Adam; Than, directly by profession, simple infidels to God."

LXXIV.

"Yet, O God!" I said, "O grave!" I said, "O mother's heart and bosom! With whom first and last are equal, saint and corpse and little child, We are fools to your deductions in these figments of heart closing; We are traitors to your causes in these sympathies defiled."

LXXXV.

"Learn more reverence, madam, not
for rank or wealth, *that* needs no
learning.—
That comes quickly, quick as sin does,
ay, and culminates to sin,—
But for Adam's seed, MAN! Trust me,
'tis a clay above your scorning,
With God's image stamped upon it,
and God's kindling breath within.

LXXXVI.

"What right have you, madam, gazing
in your palace mirror daily,
Getting so by heart your beauty which
all others must adore,
While you draw the golden ringlets
down your fingers, to vow gayly
You will wed no man that's only good
to God, and nothing more?"

LXXXVII.

"Why, what right have you, made
fair by that same God, the
sweetest woman
Of all women he has fashioned, with
your lovely spirit-face,
Which would seem too near to vanish,
if its smile were not so human,
And your voice of holy sweetness,
turning common words to grace,

LXXXVIII.

"What right *can* you have, God's
other works to scorn, despise,
revile them,
In the gross, as mere men, broadly,
not as *noble* men, forsooth;
As mere pariahs of the outer world,
forbidden to assoil them
In the hope of living, dying, near that
sweetness of your mouth?"

LXXXIX.

"Have you any answer, madam? If
my spirit were less earthly,
If its instrument were gifted with a
better silver string,
I would kneel down where I stand,
and say, 'Behold me! I am
worthy
Of thy loving, for I love thee. I am
worthy as a king.'

LXXX.

'As it is, your ermined pride I swear,
shall feel this stain upon her,
That *I*, poor, weak, toss with passion,
scorned by me and you again,
Love you, madam; dare to love you,
to my grief and your dishonor,
To my endless desolation, and your
impotent disdain."

LXXXI.

More mad words like these,—mere
madness! friend, I need not
write them fuller,
For I hear my hot soul dropping on
the lines in showers of tears.
Oh, a woman! friend, a woman! why,
a beast had scarce been duller
Than roar bestial loud complaints
against the shining of the
spheres.

LXXXII.

But at last there came a pause. I
stood all vibrating with thunder
Which my soul had used. The silence
drew her face up like a call.
Could you guess what word she uttered?
She looked up, as if in wonder,
With tears beaded on her lashes, and
said, "Bertram!" it was all.

LXXXIII.

If she had cursed me, — and she might
have, — or if even, with queenly
bearing
Which at need is used by women, she
had risen up and said,
"Sir, you are my guest, and therefore
I have given you a full hearing:
Now, beseech you, choose a name exacting
somewhat less, instead,"

LXXXIV.

I had borne it; but that "Bertram"—
why, it lies there on the paper,
A mere word, without her accent, and
you cannot judge the weight
Of the calm which crushed my passion.
I seemed drowning in a vapor,
And her gentleness destroyed me,
whom her scorn made desolate.

LXXXV.

So, struck backward and exhausted
by that inward flow of passion,
Which had rushed on, sparing nothing,
into forms of abstract truth,
By a logic agonizing through unseemly
demonstration,
And by youth's own anguish turning
grimly gray the hairs of youth,

LXXXVI.

By the sense accursed and instant,
that, if even I spake wisely,
I spake basely — using truth, if what I
spoke indeed was true,
To avenge wrong on a woman — her,
who sate there weighing nicely
A poor manhood's worth, found guilty
of such deeds as I could do! —

LXXXVII.

By such wrong and woe exhausted —
what I suffered and occasioned,
As a wild horse through a city runs
with lightning in his eyes,
And then dashing at a church's cold
and passive wall, impassioned,
Strikes the death into his burning
brain, and blindly drops and
dies —

LXXXVIII.

So I fell, struck down before her —
do you blame me, friend, for
weakness?
'Twas my strength of passion slew
me — fell before her like a
stone;
Fast the dreadful world rolled from
me on its roaring wheels of
blackness:
When the light came, I was lying in
this chamber, and alone.

LXXXIX.

Oh, of course she charged her lackeys
to bear out the sickly burden,
And to cast it from her scornful sight,
but not *beyond* the gate;
She is too kind to be cruel, and too
haughty not to pardon
Such a man as I: 'twere something to
be level to her hate.

xc.

But for me — you now are conscious
why, my friend, I write this letter,
How my life is read all backward, and
the charm of life undone.
I shall leave her house at dawn, — I
would to-night, if I were better, —
And I charge my soul to hold my body
strengthened for the sun.

xci.

When the sun has dyed the oriel, I
depart, with no last gazes,
No weak moanings (one word only,
left in writing for her hands),
Out of reach of all derision, and some
unavailing praises,
To make front against this anguish in
the far and foreign lands.

xcii.

Blame me not. I would not squander
life in grief — I am abstemious.
I but nurse my spirit's falcon that its
wing may soar again.
There's no room for tears of weakness
in the blind eyes of a Phœnix:
Into work the poet kneads them, and
he does not die *till then*.

CONCLUSION.

I.

BERTRAM finished the last pages,
while along the silence ever,
Still in hot and heavy splashes, fell
the tears on every leaf.
Having ended, he leans backward, in
his chair, with lips that quiver
From the deep unspoken, ay, and
deep unwritten, thoughts of
grief.

II.

Soh! How still the lady standeth!
'Tis a dream, — a dream of mer-
cies!
'Twixt the purple lattice-curtains how
she standeth still and pale!
'Tis a vision, sure, of mer-
cies sent to
soften his self curses,
Sent to sweep a patient quiet o'er the
tossing of his wail.

III.

"Eyes," he said, "now throbbing through me, are ye eyes that did undo me?—
Shining eyes, like antique jewels set in Parian statue-stone!
Underneath that calm white forehead are ye ever burning torrid O'er the desolate sand-desert of my heart and life undone?"

IV.

With a murmurous stir uncertain, in the air the purple curtain Swelleth in and swelleth out around her motionless pale brows, While the gliding of the river sends a rippling noise forever Through the open casement whitened by the moonlight's slant repose.

V.

Said he, "Vision of a lady, stand there silent, stand there steady! Now I see it plainly, plainly, now I cannot hope or doubt— There, the brows of mild repression; there, the lips of silent passion, Curved like an archer's bow to send the bitter arrows out."

VI.

Ever, evermore the while, in a slow silence she kept smiling, And approached him slowly, slowly, in a gliding, measured pace, With her two white hands extended, as if, praying one offended, And a look of supplication gazing earnest in his face.

VII.

Said he, "Wake me by no gesture, sound of breath, or stir of vesture! Let the blessed apparition melt not yet to its divine!"

No approaching — hush, no breathing, or my heart must swoon to death in The too utter life thou bringest, O thou dream of Geraldine!"

VIII.

Ever, evermore the while, in a slow silence she kept smiling; But the tears ran over lightly from her eyes, and tenderly:—"Dost thou, Bertram, truly love me? Is no woman far above me Found more worthy of thy poet-heart than such a one as *I*?"

IX.

Said he, "I would dream so ever, like the flowing of that river, Flowing ever in a shadow greenly onward to the sea! So, thou vision of all sweetness, princely to a full completeness, Would my heart and life flow onward, deathward, through this dream of *THEE*!"

X.

Ever, evermore the while, in a slow silence she kept smiling, While the silver tears ran faster down the blushing of her cheeks; Then, with both her hands infolding both of his, she softly told him, "Bertram, if I say I love thee, . . . 'tis the vision only speaks."

XI.

Softened, quickened to adore her, on his knee he fell before her; And she whispered low in triumph, "It shall be as I have sworn. Very rich he is in virtues, very noble, — noble, certes; And I shall not blush in knowing that men call him lowly born."



"And approached him slowly, slowly, in a gliding, measured pace." — Page 316.

THE RUNAWAY SLAVE AT PILGRIM'S POINT.

I.

I STAND on the mark beside the shore
Of the first white pilgrim's bended
knee,
Where exile turned to ancestor,
And God was thanked for liberty.
I have run through the night, my skin
is as dark,
I bend my knee down on this mark:
I look on the sky and the sea.

II.

O pilgrim-souls, I speak to you !
I see you come proud and slow
From the land of the spirits pale as
dew,
And round me, and round me, ye go.
O pilgrims ! I have gasped and run
All night long from the whips of one,
Who, in your names, works sin and
woe.

III.

And thus I thought that I would come,
And kneel here where ye knelt be-
fore,
And feel your souls around me hum
In undertone to the ocean's roar,
And lift my black face, my black hand,
Here, in your names, to curse this
land
Ye blessed in freedom's, evermore.

IV.

I am black, I am black;
And yet God made me, they say:
But, if he did so, smiling back
He must have cast his work away
Under the feet of his white creatures,
With a look of scorn, that the dusky
features
Might be trodden again to clay.

V.

And yet he has made dark things
To be glad and merry as light:
There's a little dark bird sits and
sings;
There's a dark stream ripples out
of sight;
And the dark frogs chant in the safe
morass;
And the sweetest stars are made to
pass
O'er the face of the darkest night.

VI.

But we who are dark, we are dark !
Ah God, we have no stars !
About our souls in care and cark
Our blackness shuts like prison-
bars:
The poor souls crouch so far behind
That never a comfort can they find
By reaching through the prison-bars.

VII.

Indeed, we live beneath the sky,
That great smooth hand of God
stretched out
On all his children fatherly,
To save them from the dread and
doubt
Which would be, if, from this low
place,
All opened straight up to his face
Into the grand eternity.

VIII.

And still God's sunshine and his frost,
They make us hot, they make us
cold,
As if we were not black and lost;
And the beasts and birds in wood
and fold

Do fear, and take us for very men:
Could the weep-poor-will or the cat
of the glen
Look into my eyes, and be bold ?

IX.

I am black, I am black !
But once I laughed in girlish glee,
For one of my color stood in the track
Where the drivers drove, and
looked at me;
And tender and full was the look he
gave:
Could a slave look so at another slave?
I look at the sky and the sea.

X.

And from that hour our spirits grew
As free as if unsold, unbought:
Oh, strong enough, since we were two,
To conquer the world, we thought !
The drivers drove us day by day:
We did not mind, we went one way,
And no better a freedom sought.

XI.

In the sunny ground between the
canes,
He said, "I love you," as he passed;
When the shingle-roof rang sharp with
the rains,
I heard how he vowed it fast;
While others shook, he smiled in the
hut,
As he carved me a bowl of the cacao-
nut,
Through the roar of the hurricanes.

XII.

I sang his name instead of a song,
Over and over I sang his name;
Upward and downward I drew it
along
My various notes, — the same, the
same !
I sang it low, that the slave-girls near
Might never guess from aught they
could hear
It was only a name — a name.

XIII.

I look on the sky and the sea.
We were two to love, and two to
pray,
Yes, two, O God, who cried to thee,
Though nothing didst thou say !

Coldly thou sat'st behind the sun;
And now I cry, who am but one,
Thou wilt not speak to-day.

XIV.

We were black, we were black !
We had no claim to love and bliss;
What marvel if each went to wrack ?
They wrung my cold hands out of
his,
They dragged him — where ? I
crawled to touch
His blood's mark in the dust . . . not
much,
Ye pilgrim-souls, though plain as
this!

XV.

Wrong, followed by a deeper wrong !
Mere grief's too good for such as I;
So the white men brought the shame
ere long
To strangle the sob of my agony.
They would not leave me for my dull
Wet eyes ! — it was too merciful
To let me weep pure tears, and die.

XVI.

I am black, I am black !
I wore a child upon my breast,
An amulet that hung too slack,
And in my unrest could not rest:
Thus we went moaning, child and
mother,
One to another, one to another,
Until all ended for the best.

XVII.

For hark ! I will tell you low, low,
I am black, you see;
And the babe who lay on my bosom so
Was far too white, too white for
me, —
As white as the ladies who scorned to
pray
Beside me at church but yesterday,
Though my tears had washed a
place for my knee.

XVIII.

My own, own child ! I could not bear
To look in his face, it was so white;
I covered him up with a kerchief
there,
I covered his face in close and tight;

And he moaned and struggled, as well
might be,
For the white child wanted his liber-
ty—

Ha, ha ! he wanted the master-right.

XIX.

He moaned, and beat with his head
and feet,—

His little feet that never grew;
He struck them out, as it was meet,
Against my heart to break it
through.
I might have sung and made him
mild;
But I dared not sing to the white-
faced child
The only song I knew.

XX.

I pulled the kerchief very close:
He could not see the sun, I swear,
More then, alive, than now he does
From between the roots of the man-
go . . . where?
I know where. Close ! A child and
mother
Do wrong to look at one another,
When one is black, and one is fair.

XXI.

Why, in that single glance I had
Of my child's face . . . I tell you
all,
I saw a look that made me mad ! —
The master's look, that used to fall
On my soul like his lash . . . or
worse !
And so, to save it from my curse,
I twisted it round in my shawl.

XXII.

And he moaned, and trembled from
foot to head,
He shivered from head to foot;
Till, after a time, he lay instead
Too suddenly still and mute.
I felt, beside, a stiffening cold;
I dared to lift up just a fold,
As in lifting a leaf of the mango-
fruit.

XXIII.

But my fruit . . . ha, ha ! — there had
been
(I laugh to think on't at this hour !)
Your fine white angels (who have seen
Nearest the secret of God's power)

And plucked my fruit to make them
wine,
And sucked the soul of that child of
mine
As the humming-bird sucks the
soul of the flower.

XXIV.

Ha, ha, the trick of the angels white !
They freed the white child's spirit
so.
I said not a word, but day and night
I carried the body to and fro,
And it lay on my heart like a stone,
as chill.
— The sun may shine out as much as
he will;
I am cold, though it happened a
month ago.

XXV.

From the white man's house, and the
black man's hut,
I carried the little body on;
The forest's arms did round us shut,
And silence through the trees did
run:
They asked no question as I went,
They stood too high for astonishment;
They could see God sit on his
throne.

XXVI.

My little body, kerchiefed fast,
I bore it on through the forest, on;
And when I felt it was tired at last,
I scooped a hole beneath the moon:
Through the forest-tops the angels far,
With a white sharp finger from every
star,
Did point and mock at what was
done.

XXVII.

Yet when it was all done aright,—
Earth 'twixt me and my baby
strewed,—
All changed to black earth,— nothing
white,—
A dark child in the dark ! — ensued
Some comfort, and my heart grew
young:
I sat down smiling there, and sung
The song I learnt in my maiden-
hood.

XXVIII.

And thus we two were reconciled,—
The white child and black mother,
thus;
For, as I sang it soft and wild,
The same song, more melodious,
Rose from the grave whereon I sate:
It was the dead child singing that,
To join the souls of both of us.

XXIX.

Look on the sea and the sky.
Where the pilgrims' ships first
anchored lay
The free sur; rideth gloriously,
But the pilgrim-ghosts have slid
away
Through the earliest streaks of the
morn:
My face is black; but it glares with a
scorn
Which they dare not meet by day.

XXX.

Ha!—in their stead their hunter
sons!
Ha, ha! they are on me—they hunt
in a ring!
Keep off! I brave you all at once,
I throw off your eyes like snakes
that sting!
You have killed the black eagle at
nest, I think:
Did you ever stand still in your tri-
umph, and shrink
From the stroke of her wounded
wing?

XXXI.

(Man, drop that stone you dared to
lift!)
I wish you who stand there five
abreast,
Each for his own wife's joy and gift,
A little corpse as safely at rest
As mine in the mangoes! Yes, but
she
May keep live babies on her knee,
And sing the song she likes the
best.

XXXII.

I am not mad: I am black!
I see you staring in my face—
I know you staring, shrinking back,
Ye are born of the Washington-
race,

And this land is the free America,
And this mark on my wrist—(I prove
what I say)
Ropes tied me up here to the flog-
ging-place.

XXXIII.

You think I shrieked then? Not a
sound!
I hung, as a gourd hangs in the
sun;
I only cursed them all around
As softly as I might have done
My very own child: from these sands
Up to the mountains, lift your hands,
O slaves, and end what I begun!

XXXIV.

Whips, curses: these must answer
those!
For in this UNION you have set
Two kinds of men in adverse rows,
Each loathing each, and all forget
The seven wounds in Christ's body
fair,
While HE sees gaping everywhere
Our countless wounds that pay no
debt.

XXXV.

Our wounds are different. Your
white men
Are, after all, not gods indeed,
Nor able to make Christs again
Do good with bleeding. We who
bleed
(Stand off!) we help not in our loss!
We are too heavy for our cross,
And fall and crush you and your
seed.

XXXVI.

I fall, I swoon! I look at the sky.
The clouds are breaking on my
brain.
I am floated along, as if I should die
Of liberty's exquisite pain.
In the name of the white child wait-
ing for me
In the death-dark, where we may kiss
and agree,
White men, I leave you all curse-free
In my broken heart's disdain.

THE CRY OF THE CHILDREN.

“Φεῦ, φεῦ, τι προσδέρκεσθε μ' ομμασίν, τεκνά;” — MEDEA.

I.

Do ye hear the children weeping, O my brothers,
Ere the sorrow comes with years?
They are leaning their young heads
against their mothers,
And that cannot stop their tears.
The young lambs are bleating in the meadows;
The young birds are chirping in the nest;
The young fawns are playing with the shadows;
The young flowers are blowing toward the west:
But the young, young children, O my brothers!
They are weeping bitterly.
They are weeping in the playtime of the others.
In the country of the free.

II.

Do you question the young children in the sorrow,
Why their tears are falling so?
The old man may weep for his tomorrow
Which is lost in long ago;
The old tree is leafless in the forest;
The old year is ending in the frost;
The old wound, if stricken, is the sorest;
The old hope is hardest to be lost:
But the young, young children, O my brothers!
Do you ask them why they stand Weeping sore before the bosoms of their mothers,
In our happy fatherland?

III.

They look up with their pale and sunken faces;
And their looks are sad to see,
For the man's hoary anguish draws and presses
Down the cheeks of infancy.

“Your old earth,” they say, “is very dreary;
Our young feet,” they say, “are very weak;
Few paces have we taken, yet are weary.
Our grave-rest is very far to seek.
Ask the aged why they weep, and not the children:
For the outside earth is cold,
And we young ones stand without in our bewildering,
And the graves are for the old.”

IV.

“True,” say the children, “it may happen
That we die before our time:
Little Alice died last year; her grave is shapen
Like a snowball in the rime.
We looked into the pit prepared to take her:
Was no room for any work in the close clay:
From the sleep wherein she lieth, none will wake her,
Crying, ‘Get up, little Alice! it is day.’
If you listen by that grave, in sun and shower,
With your ear down, little Alice never cries.
Could we see her face, be sure we should not know her,
For the smile has time for growing in her eyes;
And merry go her moments, lulled and stilled in
The shroud by the kirk-chime.
It is good when it happens,” say the children,
“That we die before our time.”

V.

Alas, alas, the children! They are seeking
Death in life, as best to have.
They are binding up their hearts away from breaking,
With a cement from the grave.

Go out, children, from the mine and
from the city;
Sing out, children, as the little
thrushes do;
Pluck your handfuls of the meadow-
cowslips pretty;
Laugh aloud, to feel your fingers let
them through.
But they answer, "Are your cowslips
of the meadows
Like our weeds anear the mine?
Leave us quiet in the dark of the coal-
shadows,
From your pleasures fair and fine.

VI.

"For oh!" say the children, "we are
weary,
And we cannot run or leap;
If we cared for any meadows, it were
merely
To drop down in them, and sleep.
Our knees tremble sorely in the stoop-
ing;
We fall upon our faces, trying to go;
And, underneath our heavy eyelids
drooping,
The reddest flower would look as
pale as snow;
For all day we drag our burden tiring,
Through the coal-dark, under-
ground;
Or all day we drive the wheels of iron
In the factories, round and round.

VII.

"For all day the wheels are droning,
turning;
Their wind comes in our faces,
Till our hearts turn, our heads with
pulses burning,
And the walls turn in their places.
Turns the sky in the high window
blank and reeling,

VIII.
Ay, be silent! Let them hear each
other breathing
For a moment, mouth to mouth;
Let them touch each other's hands, in
a fresh wreathing
Of their tender human youth;
Let them feel that this cold metallic
motion
Is not all the life God fashions or
reveals;
Let them prove their living souls
against the notion
That they live in you, or under you,
O wheels!
Still, all day, the iron wheels go onward,
Grinding life down from its mark;
And the children's souls, which God
is calling sunward,
Spin on blindly in the dark.

IX.

Now tell the poor young children, O
my brothers,
To look up to Him, and pray;
So the blessed One who blesseth all
the others
Will bless them another day.
They answer, "Who is God, that he
should hear us
While the rushing of the iron wheels
is stirred?
When we sob aloud, the human crea-
tures near us
Pass by, hearing not, or answer not
a word;
And we hear not (for the wheels in
their resounding)
Strangers speaking at the door.
Is it likely God, with angels singing
round him,
Hears our weeping any more?

X.

"Two words, indeed, of praying we
remember;
And at midnight's hour of harm,
'Our Father,' looking upward in the
chamber,
We say softly for a charm.¹

¹ A fact rendered pathetically historical
by Mr. Horne's report of his commission.
The name of the poet of "Orion" and
"Cosmo de Medic" has, however, a change
of associations, and comes in time to re-
mind me that we have some noble poetic
heat of literature still, however open to the
reproach of being somewhat geld in our
humanity. — 1844.

We know no other words except 'Our Father;'
And we think, that, in some pause
of angels' song,
God may pluck them with the silence
sweet to gather,
And hold both within his right
hand, which is strong.
'Our Father!' If he heard us, he
would surely
(For they call him good and mild)
Answer, smiling down the steep
world very purely,
'Come and rest with me, my child.'

xi.

"But, no!" say the children, weeping
faster,
"He is speechless as a stone;
And they tell us, of his image is the
master
Who commands us to work on.
Go to!" say the children, — "up in
heaven,
Dark, wheel-like, turning clouds
are all we find.
Do not mock us: grief has made us
unbelieving;
We look up for God; but tears have
made us blind."
Do you hear the children weeping and
disproving,
O my brothers, what ye preach?
For God's possible is taught by his
world's loving —
And the children doubt of each.

xii.

And well may the children weep be-
fore you!
They are weary ere they run;
They have never seen the sunshine,
nor the glory
Which is brighter than the sun.
They know the grief of man, without
its wisdom;
They sink in man's despair, without
its calm;
Are slaves, without the liberty in
Christdom;
Are martyrs, by the pang without
the palm:
Are worn as if with age, yet unre-
trievably
The harvest of its memories can-
not reap;
Are orphans of the earthly love and
heavenly—
Let them weep! let them weep!

xiii.

They look up with their pale and
sunken faces,
And their look is dread to see,
For they mind you of their angels in
high places,
With eyes turned on Deity.
"How long," they say, "how long,
O cruel nation,
Will you stand, to move the world
on a child's heart, —
Stifle down with a mailed heel its pal-
pitation,
And tread onward to your throne
amid the mart?
Our blood splashes upward, O gold-
heaper,
And your purple shows your path!
But the child's sob in the silence
curses deeper
Than the strong man in his
wrath."

A CHILD ASLEEP.

I.

How he sleepeth, having drunken
Weary childhood's mandragore!
From its pretty eyes have sunken
Pleasures to make room for more;
Sleeping near the withered nosegay
which he pulled the day before.

II.

Nosegays! leave them for the wak-
ing;
Throw them earthward where
they grow:
Dim are such beside the breaking
Amaranths he looks unto:
Folded eyes see brighter colors than
the open ever do.

III.

Heaven-flowers rayed by shadows
golden
From the palms they sprang be-
neath,
Now, perhaps, divinely holden,
Swing against him in a wreath:
We may think so from the quicken-
ing of his bloom and of his
breath.

IV.

Vision unto vision calleth
While the young child dreameth
on:
Fair, O dreamer, theo befalleth
With the glory thou hast won!
Darker wast thou in the garden yes-
termorn by summer-sun.

V.

We should see the spirits ringing
Round thee, were the clouds
away:
'Tis the child-heart draws them,
singing
In the silent-seeming clay—
Singing I stars that seem the mutest
go in music all the way.

VI.

As the moths around a taper,
As the bees around a rose,
As the gnats around a vapor,
So the spirits group and close
Round about a holy childhood as if
drinking its repose.

VII.

Shapes of brightness overlean thee,
Flash their diadems of youth
On the ringlets which half screen
thee,
While thou smilest . . . not in
sooth
Thy smile, but the overfair one, dropt
from some ethereal mouth.

VIII.

Haply it is angels' duty,
During slumber, shade by shade
To fine down this childish beauty
To the thing it must be made
Ere the world shall bring it praises,
or the tomb shall see it fade.

IX.

Softly, softly I make no noises!
Now he lieth dead and dumb;
Now he hears the angels' voices
Folding silence in the room;
Now he muses deep the meaning of
the heaven-words as they come.

X.

Speak not! he is consecrated;
Breathe no breath across his eyes:
Lifted up and separated
On the hand of God he lies
In a sweetness beyond touching held
in cloistral sanctities.

XI.

Could ye bless him, father, mother—
Bless the dimple in his cheek?
Dare ye look at one another,
And the benediction speak?
Would ye not break out in weeping,
and confess yourselves too
weak?

XII.

He is harmless, ye are sinful;
Ye are troubled, he at ease:
From his slumber, virtue winful
Floweth outward with increase.
Dare not bless him! but be blessed by
his peace, and go in peace.

THE FOURFOLD ASPECT.

I.

WHEN ye stood up in the house
With your little childish feet,
And, in touching life's first shows,
First the touch of love did meet,—
Love and nearness seeming one,
By the heartlight cast before,
And of all beloveds, none
Standing farther than the door;
Not a name being dear to thought,
With its owner beyond call;
Not a face, unless it brought
Its own shadow to the wall;
When the worst recorded change
Was of apple dropt from bough,
When love's sorrow seemed more
strange
Than love's treason can seem
now:
Then, the Loving took you up
Soft, upon their elder knees,
Telling why the statues droop
Underneath the churchyard trees,

And how ye must lie beneath them
Through the winters long and deep,
Till the last trump overbreathe them,
And ye smile out of your sleep.
Oh, ye lifted up your head, and it seemed as if they said
A tale of fairy ships
With a swan-wing for a sail;
Oh, ye kissed their loving lips
For the merry, merry tale —
So carelessly ye thought upon the dead.

II.

Soon ye read in solemn stories
Of the men of long ago,
Of the pale bewildering glories
Shining farther than we know;
Of the heroes with the laurel,
Of the poets with the bay,
Of the two world's earnest quarrel
For that beauteous Helena;
How Achilles at the portal
Of the tent heard footsteps nigh,
And his strong heart, half-immortal,
Met the *keitai* with a cry;
How Ulysses left the sunlight
For the pale eidola race,
Blank and passive through the dun light,
Staring blindly in his face;
How that true wife said to Pectus,
With calm smile and wounded heart,
“Sweet, it hurts not!” How Admetus
Saw his blessed one depart;
How King Arthur proved his mission,
And Sir Roland wound his horn,
And at Sangreal's moony vision
Swords did bristle round like corn.
Oh, ye lifted up your head, and it seemed, the while ye read,
That this death then must be found
A Valhalla for the crowned,
The heroic who prevail;
None be sure can enter in
Far below a paladin
Of a noble, noble wife —
So awfully ye thought upon the dead!

III.

Ay, but soon ye woke up shrieking,
As a child that wakes at night
From a dream of sisters speaking
In a garden's summer-light, —
That wakes starting up and bounding,
In a lonely, lonely bed,
With a wall of darkness round him,
Stifling black about his head!
And the full sense of your mortal
Rushed upon you deep and loud,
And ye heard the thunder hurtle
From the silence of the cloud.
Funeral-torches at your gateway
Threw a dreadful light within.
All things changed: you rose up straightway,
And saluted Death and Sin.
Since, your outward man has railed,
And your eye and voice grown bold;
Yet the Sphinx of Life stands pallid,
With her saddest secret told.
Happy places have grown holy:
If ye went where once ye went,
Only tears would fall down slowly,
As at solemn sacrament.
Merry books, once read for pastime,
If ye dared to read again,
Only memories of the last time
Would swim darkly up the brain.
Household names, which used to flutter
Through your laughter unawares,
God's divinest ye could utter
With less trembling in your prayers.
Ye have dropt adown your head, and it seems as if ye tread
On your own hearts in the path
Ye are called to in His wrath,
And your prayers go up in wail
— “Dost Thou see, then, all our loss,
O Thou agonized on cross?
Art thou reading all its tale?”
So mournfully ye think upon the dead!

IV.

Pray, pray, thou who also wepest,
And the drops will slacken so.
Weep, weep, and the watch thou keepest
With a quicker count will go.

Think: the shadow on the dial
 For the nature most undone
 Marks the passing of the trial,
 Proves the presence of the sun.
 Look, look up, in starry passion,
 To the throne above the spheres:
 Learn: the spirit's gravitation
 Still must differ from the tear's.
 Hope: with all the strength thou
 usest
 In embracing thy despair.
 Love: the earthly love thou lostest
 Shall return to thee more fair.
 Work: make clear the forest-tangles
 Of the wildest stranger-land.
 Trust: the blessed deathly angels
 Whisper, " Sabbath hours at
 hand!"
 By the heart's wound when most
 gory,
 By the longest agony,
 Smile! — Behold in sudden glory
 The TRANFIGURED smiles on *thee*!
 And ye lifted up your head, and it
 seemed as if He said,
 " My beloved, is it so ?
 Have ye tasted of my woe ?
 Of my heaven ye shall not
 fail ! "
 He stands brightly where the
 shade is,
 With the keys of Death and
 Hades,
 And there, ends the mournful
 tale —
 So hopefully ye think upon the dead !

NIGHT AND THE MERRY MAN.

NIGHT.

'NEATH my moon, what dost thou,
 With a somewhat paler brow
 Than she giveth to the ocean ?
 He, without a pulse or motion,
 Muttering low before her stands,
 Lifting his invoking hands
 Like a seer before a sprite,
 To catch her oracles of light:
 But thy soul out-trembles now
 Many pulses on thy brow.

Where be all thy laughers clear,
 Others laughed alone to hear ?
 Where thy quaint jests, said for
 fame ?
 Where thy dances, mixed with game ?
 Where thy festive companies,
 Mooned o'er with ladies' eyes
 All more bright for thee, I trow ?
 'Neath my moon, what dost thou ?

THE MERRY MAN.

I AM digging my warm heart
 Till I find its coldest part;
 I am digging wide and low,
 Farther than a spade will go,
 Till that, when the pit is deep
 And large enough, I there may heap
 All my present pain and past
 Joy, dead things that look aghast
 By the daylight; now 'tis done.
 Throw them in, by one and one !
 I must laugh, at rising sun.

Memories, — of fancy's golden
 Treasures which my hands have
 holden
 Till the chillness made them ache;
 Of childhood's hopes, that used to
 wake
 If birds were in a singing strain,
 And, for less cause, sleep again;
 Of the moss seat in the wood
 Where I trysted solitude;
 Of the hilltop where the wind
 Used to follow me behind,
 Then in sudden rush to blind
 Both my glad eyes with my hair,
 Taken gladly in the snare;
 Of the climbing up the rocks,
 Of the playing 'neath the oaks
 Which retain beneath them now
 Only shadow of the bough;
 Of the lying on the grass
 While the clouds did overpass,
 Only they, so lightly driven,
 Seeming betwixt me and heaven;
 Of the little prayers serene,
 Murmuring of earth and sin;
 Of large-leaved philosophy
 Leaning from my childish knee;
 Of poetic book sublime,
 Soul-kissed for the first dear time,
 Greek or English, ere I knew
 Life was not a poem too:
 Throw them in, by one and one !
 I must laugh, at rising sun.

— Of the glorious ambitions
Yet unquenched by their fruitions;
Of the reading out the nights;
Of the straining at mad heights;
Of achievements, less descried
By a dear few than magnified;
Of praises from the many earned
When praise from love was undis-
cerned;

Of the sweet reflecting gladness
Softened by itself to sadness:
Throw them in, by one and one!
I must laugh, at rising sun.

What are these? more, more than
these!

Throw in dearer memories! —
Of voices whereof but to speak
Makes mine own all sunk and weak;
Of smiles the thought of which is
sweeping

All my soul to floods of weeping;
Of looks whose absence fain would
weigh
My looks to the ground for aye;
Of clasping hands — ah me, I wring
Mine, and in a tremble fling
Downward, downward, all this pain-
ing!

Partings with the sting remaining,
Meetings with a deeper throo
Since the joy is ruined so,
Changes with a fiery burning,
(Shadows upon all the turning),
Thoughts of . . . with a storm they
came,

Them I have not breath to name:
Downward, downward, be they cast
In the pit! and now at last
My work beneath the moon is done,
And I shall laugh, at rising sun.

But let me pause or ere I cover
All my treasures darkly over:
I will speak not in thine ears,
Only tell my beaded tears
Silently, most silently.
When the last is calmly told,
Let that same moist rosary
With the rest sepulchred be,
Finished now! The darksome mould
Sealeth up the darksome pit.
I will lay no stone on it:
Grasses I will sow instead,
Fit for Queen Titania's tread;
Flowers, encolored with the sun,
And *aa* written upon none;
Thus, whenever saileth by
The Lady World of dainty eye,

Not a grief shall here remain,
Silken shoon to damp or stain;
And while she lisps, "I have not
seen
Any place more smooth and clean,"
Here she cometh! Ha, ha! who
Laughs as loud as I can do?

EARTH AND HER PRAISERS.

I.

THE Earth is old;
Six thousand winters make her heart
a-cold:
The sceptre slanteth from her palsied
hold.
She saith, " 'las me! God's word
that I was 'good'
Is taken back to heaven,
From whence, when any sound comes,
I am riven
By some sharp bolt; and now no angel
would
Descend with sweet dew-silence on
my mountains,
To glorify the lovely river fountains
That gush along their side:
I see, O weary change! I see instead
This human wrath and pride,
These thrones and tombs, judicial
wrong and blood,
And bitter words are poured upon
mine head —
'O Earth! thou art a stage for tricks
unholie,
A church for most remorseful melan-
choly;
Thou art so spoilt we should forget
we had
An Eden in thee, wert thou not so
sad!'
Sweet children, I am old! ye, every
one,
Do keep me from a portion of my
sun:
Give praise in change for
brightness!
That I may shake my hills in infinite-
ness

Of breezy laughter, as in youthful mirth,
To hear Earth's sons and daughters praising Earth."

II.

Whereupon a child began,
With spirit running up to man
As by angel's shining ladder,
(May he find no cloud above !)
Seeming he had ne'er been saddler
All his days than now,
Sitting in the chestnut-grove,
With that joyous overflow
Of smiling from his mouth o'er brow
And cheek and chin, as if the breeze,
Leaning tricksy from the trees
To part his golden hairs, had blown
Into an hundred smiles that one.

III.

"O rare, rare Earth!" he saith,
"I will praise thee presently;
Not to-day, I have no breath:
I have hunted squirrels three —
Two ran down in the furzy hollow;
Where I could not see nor follow;
One sits at the top of the fibbert-tree,
With a yellow mit and a mock at me:
Presently it shall be done!
When I see which way these two have run,
When the mocking one at the fibbertop
Shall leap adown, and beside me stop,
Then, rare Earth, rare Earth,
Will I pause, having known thy worth,
To say all good of thee!"

IV.

Next a lover, — with a dream
'Neath his waking eyelids hidden,
And a frequent sigh unbidden,
And an idlesse all the day
Beside a wandering stream,
And a silence that is made
Of a word he dares not say, —
Shakes slow his pensive head:
"Earth, Earth!" saith he,
"If spirits, like thy roses, grew
On one stalk, and winds austere
Could but only blow them near,
To share each other's dew;
If, when summer rains agree
To beautify thy hills, I knew
Looking off them I might see
Some one very beauteous too, —

"Then Earth," saith he,
"I would praise . . . nay, nay — not
thee!"

V.

Will the pedant name her next?
Crabbed with a crabbed text
Sits he in his study nook,
With his elbow on a book,
And with stately crossed knees,
And a wrinkle deeply thrild
Through his lowering brow,
Caused by making proofer know
That Plato in "Parinenides"
Meant the same Spinoza did;
Or that an hundred of the groping
Like himself had made one Homer,
Homeros being a misnomer.
What hath he to do with praise
Of Earth or aught? Whene'er the sloping
Sunbeams through his windows daze
His eyes off from the learned phrase,
Straightway he draws close the curtain.
May abstraction keep him dumb!
Were his lips to ope, 'tis certain
"Derivatum est" would come.

VI.

Then a mourner moveth pale
In a silence full of wail,
Raising not his sunken head
Because he wandered last that way
With that one beneath the clay:
Weeping not, because that one,
The only one who would have said,
"Cease to weep, beloved!" has gone
Whence returneth comfort none.
The silence breaketh suddenly, —
"Earth, I praise thee!" crieth he,
"Thou hast a grave for also me."

VII.

Ha, a poet! know him by
The ecstasy-dilated eye,
Not uncharged with tears that ran
Upward from his heart of man;
By the cheek, from hour to hour,
Kindled bright, or sunken wan
With a sense of lonely power;
By the brow uplifted higher
Than others, for more low declining;
By the lip which words of fire
Overboiling have burned white,
While they gave the nations light:
Ay, in every time and place,
Ye may know the poet's face
By the shade or shining.

VIII.

'Neath a golden cloud he stands,
Spreading his impassioned hands.
"O God's Earth!" he saith, "the sign
From the Father-son to mine
Of all beauteous mysteries,
Of all perfect images
Which, divine in his divine,
In my human only are
Very excellent and fair!
Think not, Earth, that I would raise
Weary forehead in thy praise,
(Weary, that I cannot go
Farther from thy region low,)
If were struck no richer meanings
From thee than thyself. The leanings
Of the close trees o'er the brim
Of a sunshine-haunted stream
Have a sound beneath their leaves,
Not of wind, not of wind,
Which the poet's voice achieves;
The faint mountains, heaped behind,
Have a falling on their tops,
Not of dew, not of dew,
Which the poet's fancy drops:
Viewless things his eyes can view,
Driftings of his dream do light
All the skies by day and night.
And the seas that deepest roll
Carry murmurs of his soul.
Earth, I praise thee! praise thou me!
God perfecteth his creation
With this recipient poet-passion,
And makes the beautiful to be.
I praise thee, O beloved sign,
From the God-soul unto mine!
Praise me, that I cast on thee
The cunning sweet interpretation,
The help and glory and dilation
Of mine immortality!"

IX.

There was silence. None did dare
To use again the spoken air
Of that far-charming voice, until
A Christian resting on the hill,
With a thoughtful smile subdued
(Seeming learnt in solitude)
Which a weeper might have viewed
Without new tears, did softly say,
And looked up unto heaven alway
While he praised the Earth,—

"O Earth,
I count the praises thou art worth,
By thy waves that move aloud,
By thy hills against the cloud,
By thy valleys warm and green,
By the copses' elms between,

By their birds, which, like a sprite
Scattered by a strong delight
Into fragments musical,
Stir and sing in every bush;
By thy silver founts that fall,
As if to entice the stars at night
To thine heart: by grass and rush,
And little weeds the children pull,
Mistook for flowers!

— Oh, beautiful

Art thou, Earth, albeit worse
Than in heaven is called good!
Good to us, that we may know
Meekly from thy good to go;
While the holy, crying blood
Puts its music kind and low
'Twixt such ears as are not dull,
And thine ancient curse!

x.

"Praised be the mosses soft
In thy forest pathways oft,
And the thorns, which make us
think
Of the thornless river-brink
Where the ransomed tread;
Praised be thy sunny gleams,
And the storm, that worketh dreams
Of calm unfinished;
Praised be thine active days,
And thy night-time's solemn need,
When in God's dear book we read
No night shall be therein;
Praised be thy dwellings warm
By household fagot's cheerful blaze,
Where, to hear of pardoned sin,
Pauseth oft the merry din,
Save the babe's upon the arm
Who croweth to the crackling wood:
Yea, and, better understood,
Praised be thy dwellings cold,
Hid beneath the churchyard mould,
Where the bodies of the saints,
Separate from earthly taints,
Lie asleep, in blessing bound,
Waiting for the trumpet's sound
To free them into blessing — none
Weeping more beneath the sun,
Though dangerous words of human
love
Be graven very near, above.

xi.

"Earth, we Christians praise thee
thus,
Even for the change that comes
With a grief from thee to us;
For thy cradles and thy tombs,

For the pleasant corn and wine
And summer-heat, and also for
The frost upon the sycamore
And hail upon the vine!"

THE VIRGIN MARY TO THE CHILD JESUS.

"But see the Virgin blest
Hath laid her babe to rest."
MILTON's Hymn on the Nativity.

I.

SLEEP, sleep, mine Holy One!
My flesh, my Lord! — what name? I
do not know
A name that seemeth not too high or
low,
Too far from me or heaven:
My Jesus, *that* is best! that word be-
ing given
By the majestic angel whose com-
mand
Was softly as a man's beseeching,
said,
When I and all the earth appeared to
stand
In the great overflow
Of light celestial from his wings and
head.
Sleep, sleep, my saving One!

II.

And art thou come for saving, baby-
browed
And speechless Being — art thou
come for saving?
The palm that grows beside our door
is bowed
By treadings of the low wind from
the south,
A restless shadow through the cham-
ber waving:
Upon its bough a bird sings in the
sun;
But thou, with that close slumber on
thy mouth,
Dost seem of wind and sun already
weary.
Art come for saving, O my weary
One?

III.

Perchance this sleep, that shutteth out
the dreary
Earth sounds and motions, opens on
thy soul
High dreams on fire with God;
High songs that make the pathways
where they roll
More bright than stars do theirs; and
visions new
Of thine eternal Nature's old abode.
Suffer this mother's kiss,
Best thing that earthly is,
To glide the music and the glory
through,
Nor narrow in thy dream the broad
upliftings
Of any seraph wing.
Thus noiseless, thus. Sleep, sleep,
my dreaming One!

IV.

The slumber of his lips meseems to
run
Through my lips to mine heart, to all
its shifting
Of sensual life, bringing contrarious-
ness
In a great calm. I feel I could lie
down
As Moses did, and die,¹— and then
live most.
I am 'ware of you, heavenly Pres-
ences,
That stand with your peculiar light
unlost,
Each forehead with a high thought
for a crown,
Unsunned i' the sunshine! I am
'ware. Ye throw
No shade against the wall! How
motionless
Ye round me with your living statu-
ary,
While through your whiteness, in
and outwardly,
Continual thoughts of God appear to
go,
Like light's soul in itself. I bear, I
bear
To look upon the dropt lids of your
eyes,
Though their external shining testi-
fies
To that beatitude within which were
Enough to blast an eagle at his sun:

¹ It is a Jewish tradition that Moses died of the kisses of God's lips.

I fall not on my sad clay face before
ye, —

I look on His, I know
My spirit which dilateth with the woo
Of His mortality,
May well contain your glory.
Yea, drop your lids more low.
Ye are but fellow-worshippers with
me !
Sleep, sleep, my worshipped One !

The blessedest of women ! ” — bless-
edest,

Not holiest, not noblest, no high
name
Whose height misplaced may pierce
me like a shame
When I sit meek in heaven !

For me, for me,

God knows that I am feeble like the
rest !

I often wandered forth more child
than maiden,
Among the midnight hills of Galilee
Whose summits looked heaven-
laden,

Listening to silence as it seemed to be
God’s voice, so soft yet strong, so
fain to press

Upon my heart as heaven did on the
height,
And waken up its shadows by a
light,

And show its vileness by a holiness.
Then I knelt down most silent like
the night,

Too self-renounced for fears,
Raising my small face to the bound-
less blue
Whose stars did mix and tremble in
my tears:
God heard them falling after, with his
dew.

V.
We sate among the stalls at Bethle-
hem;

The dumb kine, from their fodder
turning them,

Softened their hornèd faces
To almost human gazes

Toward the newly Born:

The simple shepherds from the star-
lit brooks

Brought visionary looks,
As yet in their astonished hearing rung
The strange sweet angel-tongue:
The magi of the East, in sandals
worn,

Knelt reverent, sweeping round,
With long pale beards, their gifts
upon the ground,

The incense, myrrh, and gold
These baby hands were impotent to
hold:

So let all earthlies and celestials wait
Upon thy royal state.

Sleep, sleep, my kingly One !

VII.

So, seeing my corruption, can I see
This Incorruptible now born of me,
This fair new Innocence no sun did
chance

To shine on (for even Adam was no
child),

Created from my nature all defiled,
This mystery, from out mine igno-
rance, —

Nor feel the blindness, stain, corrup-
tion, more

Than others do, or I did heretofore ?
Can hands wherein such burden pure
has been

Not open with the cry, “ Unclean,
unclean,”

More oft than any else beneath the
skies ?

Ah King, ah Christ, ah son !
The kine, the shepherds, the abased

wise

Must all less lowly wait
Than I, upon thy state.

Sleep, sleep, my kingly One.

VI.

I am not proud — meek angels, ye in-
vest

New meeknesses to hear such utter-
ance rest

On mortal lips, — “ I am not proud ”
— not proud !

Albeit in my flesh God sent his Son,
Albeit over him my head is bowed
As others bow before him, still mine
heart

Bows lower than their knees. O cen-
turies

That roll in vision your futurities
My future grave athwart,

Whose murmurs seem to reach me
while I keep

Watch o’er this sleep,
Say of me as the Heavenly said,

“ Thou art

VIII.

Art thou a King, then? Come, his
universe,
Come, crown me him a King.
Pluck rays from all such stars as
never fling
Their light where fell a curse,
And make a crowning for this kingly
brow.
What is my word? Each empyreal
star
Sits in a sphere afar
In shining ambuscade:
The child-brow, crowned by none,
Keeps its unchildlike shade.
Sleep, sleep, my crownless One.

IX.

Unchildlike shade! No other babe
doth wear
An aspect very sorrowful, as thou.
No small babe-smiles my watching
heart has seen
To float like speech the speechless
lips between,
No dovelike cooing in the golden air,
No quick, short joys of leaping baby-
hood:
Alas! our earthly good
In heaven thought evil, seems too
good for thee.
Yet sleep, my weary One.

X.

And then the drear, sharp tongue of
prophecy,
With the dread sense of things which
shall be done,
Doth smite me only, like a sword : a
sword?
That "smites the Shepherd." Then,
I think aloud
The words "despised," "rejected,"
every word
Recoiling into darkness as I view
The DARLING on my knee.
Bright angels, move not, lest ye stir
the cloud
Betwixt my soul and his futurity.
I must not die, with mother's work to
do,
And could not live—and see.

XI.

It is enough to bear
This image still and fair;
This holier in sleep
Than a saint at prayer;

This aspect of a child
Who never sinned or smiled;
This presence in an infant's face;
This sadness most like love;
This love than love more deep;
This weakness like omnipotence
It is so strong to move.
Awful is this watching place,
Awful what I see from hence,—
A king without regalia,
A God without the thunder,
A child without the heart for play;
Ay, a Creator, rent asunder
From his first glory, and cast away
On his own world, for me alone
To hold in hands created, crying,
"SON!"

XII.

That tear fell not on thee,
Beloved, yet thou stirrest in thy
slumber!
Thou, stirring not for glad sounds out
of number,
Which through the vibratory palm-
trees run
From summer wind and bird,
So quickly hast thou heard
A tear fall silently?
Wak'st thou, O loving one?

AN ISLAND.

"All goeth but God's will."—OLD PORT.

I.

My dream is of an island place,
Which distant seas keep lonely,—
A little island on whose face
The stars are watchers only:
Those bright, still stars! they need
not seem
Brighter or stiller in my dream.

II.

An island full of hills and dells,
All rumpled and uneven
With green recesses, sudden swells,
And odorous valleys driven
So deep and straight, that always there
The wind is cradled in soft air.

III.

Hills running up to heaven for light
Through woods that half-way ran,
As if the wild earth mimicked right
The wilder heart of man:
Only it shall be greener far,
And gladder, than hearts ever are.

IV.

More like, perhaps, that mountain piece
Of Dante's paradise,
Disrupt to an hundred hills like these,
In falling from the skies;
Bringing within it all the roots
Of heavenly trees and flowers and fruits:

V.

For, saving where the gray rocks strike
Their javelins up the azure,
Or where deep fissures, miser-like,
Hoard up some fountain treasure,
(And e'en in them, stoop down and hear
Leaf sounds with water in your ear),

VI.

The place is all awave with trees,—
Limes, myrtles purple-headed,
Acacias having drunk the lees
Of the night-dew, faint-headed,
And wan gray olive-woods, which
seen
The fittest foliage for a dream.

VII.

Trees, trees, on all sides! They combine
Their plumy shades to throw,
Through whose clear fruit and blos-
son fine
Whene'er the sun may go,
The ground beneath he deeply stains,
As passing through cathedral panes.

VIII.

But little needs this earth of ours
That shining from above her,
When many pleiades of flowers
(Not one lost) star her over;
The rays of their unnumbered hues
Being all refracted by the dews.

IX.

Wide-petaled plants that boldly drink
The Amreeta of the sky,
Shut bells that dull with rapture sink,
And lolling buds, half shy:
I cannot count them, but between
Is room for grass and mosses green,

X.

And brooks, that glass in different
strengths
All colors in disorder,
Or, gathering up their silver lengths
Beside their winding border,
Sleep, haunted through the slumber
hidden,
By lilies white as dreams in Eden.

XI.

Nor think each archèd tree with each
Too closely interlaces
To admit of vistas out of reach,
And broad moon-lighted places,
Upon whose sward the antlered deer
May view their double image clear.

XII.

For all this island's creature-full
(Kept happy not by halves),
Mild cows, that at the vine-wreaths
pull,
Then low back at their calves
With tender lowings, to approve
The warm mouths milking them for
love.

XIII.

Free, gamesome horses, antelopes,
And harmless leaping leopards,
And buffaloes upon the slopes,
And sheep unruly by shepherds;
Hares, lizards, hedgehogs, badgers,
mice,
Snakes, squirrels, frogs, and butter-
flies.

XIV.

And birds that live there in a crowd,
Horned owls, rapt nightingales,
Larks bold with heaven, and peacocks
proud,
Self-sphered in those grand tails;
All creatures glad and safe, I deem:
No guns nor springs in my dream!

XV.

The island's edges are a-wing
 With trees that overbranch
 The sea with song-birds weleoming
 The curlews to green change;
 And doves from half-closed lids espy
 The red and purple fish go by.

XVI.

One dove is answering in trust
 The water every minute,
 Thinking so soft a murmur must
 Have her mate's cooing in it:
 So softly doth earth's beauty round
 Infuse itself in ocean's sound.

XVII.

My sanguine soul bounds forward
 To meet the bounding waves;
 Beside them straightway I repair,
 To live within the caves:
 And near me two or three may dwell,
 Whom dreams fantastic please as well.

XVIII.

Long winding caverns, glittering far
 Into a crystal distance!
 Through clefts of which, shall many a
 star
 Shine clear without resistance!
 And carry down its rays the smell
 Of flowers above invisible.

XIX.

I said that two or three might choose
 Their dwelling near mine own,—
 Those who would change man's voice
 and use,
 For Nature's way and tone;
 Man's veering heart and careless eyes,
 For Nature's steadfast sympathies.

XX.

Ourselves, to meet her faithfulness,
 Shall play a faithful part;
 Her beautiful shall ne'er address
 The monstrous at our heart:
 Her musical shall ever touch
 Something within us also such.

XXI.

Yet shall she not our mistress live,
 As doth the moon of ocean,
 Though gently as the moon she give
 Our thoughts a light and motion:
 More like a harp of many lays,
 Moving its master while he plays.

XXII.

No sod in all that island doth
 Yawn open for the dead;
 No wind hath borne a traitor's oath;
 No earth, a mourner's tread:
 We cannot say by stream or shade,
 "I suffered here, was here betrayed."

XXIII.

Our only "farewell" we shall laugh
 To shifting cloud or hour,
 And use our only epitaph
 To some bud turned a flower:
 Our only tears shall serve to prove
 Excess in pleasure or in love.

XXIV.

Our fancies shall their plumage catch
 From fairest island-birds,
 Whose eggs let young ones out at
 hatch,
 Born singing! then our words
 Unconsciously shall take the dyes
 Of those prodigious fantasies.

XXV.

Yea, soon, no consonant unsmooth
 Our smile-tuned lips shall reach;
 Sounds sweet as Hellas spake in
 youth
 Shall glide into our speech:
 (What music, certes, can you find
 As soft as voices which are kind?)

XXVI.

And often, by the joy without
 And in us overcome,
 We, through our musing, shall let
 float
 Such poems—sitting dumb—
 As Pindar might have writ if he
 Had tended sheep in Arcady;

XXVII.

Or Æschylus—the pleasant fields
 He died in, longer knowing;
 Or Homer, had men's sins and shields
 Been lost in Meles flowing;
 Or poct Plato, had the undim
 Unsetting Godlight broke on him.

XXVIII.

Choose me the cave most worthy
 choice,
 To make a place for prayer,
 And I will choose a praying voice
 To pour our spirits there:

How silvery the echoes run !
Thy will be done, — thy will be done.

XXIX.

Gently yet strangely uttered words !
 They lift me from my dream;
 The island fadeth with its swards
 That did no more than seem:
 The streams are dry, no sun could
 find —
 The fruits are fallen without wind.

XXX.

So oft the doing of God's will
 Our foolish wills undoeth !
 And yet what idle dream breaks ill,
 Which morning-light subdueth ?
 And who would murmur and mis-
 doubt,
 When God's great sunrise finds him
 out ?

THE SOUL'S TRAVEL-
LING.

*Hδη νοερούς
 Ήτασαι ταρασούς.*

SYNESIUS.

I.

I DWELL amid the city ever.
 The great humanity which beats
 Its life along the stony streets,
 Like a strong and unsunned river
 In a self-made course,
 I sit and harken while it rolls.
 Very sad and very hoarse
 Certes is the flow of souls;
 Infinitest tendencies:
 By the finite prest and pent,
 In the finite, turbulent:
 How we tremble in surprise
 When sometimes, with an awful
 sound,
 God's great plummet strikes the
 ground !

II.

The champ of the steeds on the silver
 bit
 As they whirl the rich man's carriage
 by;

The beggar's whine as he looks at
 it —
 But it goes too fast for charity;
 The trail on the street of the poor
 man's broom,
 That the lady who walks to her pal-
 ace-home,
 On her silken skirt may catch no
 dust;
 The tread of the business-men who
 must
 Count their per-cent by the paces
 they take;
 The cry of the babe unheard of its
 mother
 Though it lie on her breast, while she
 thinks of the other
 Laid yesterday where it will not
 wake;
 The flower-girl's prayer to buy roses
 and pinks,
 Held out in the smoke, like stars by
 day;
 The gin-door's oath that hollowly
 chinks
 Guilt upon grief, and wrong upon
 hate;
 The cabman's cry to get out of the
 way;
 The dustman's call down the area-
 grate;
 The young maid's jest, and the old
 wife's scold,
 The haggling talk of the boys at a
 stall,
 The fight in the street which is backed
 for gold,
 The plea of the lawyers in Westmin-
 ster Hall;
 The drop on the stones of the blind
 man's staff
 As he trades in his own grief's sacred-
 ness;
 The brothel shriek, and the Newgate
 laugh;
 The hum upon 'Change, and the or-
 gan's grinding;
 (The grinder's face being neverthe-
 less
 Dry and vacant of even woe
 While the children's hearts are leap-
 ing so
 At the merry music's winding);
 The black-plumed funeral's creeping
 train
 Long and slow (and yet they will
 go
 As fast as life, though it hurry and
 strain !)

Creeping the populous houses through,
And nodding their plumes at either side, —
At many a house where an infant, new
To the sunshiny world, has just struggled and cried, —
At many a house where sitteth a bride
Trying to-morrow's coronals
With a scarlet blush to-day:
Slowly creep the funerals,
As none should hear the noise, and say,
“The living, the living, must go away
To multiply the dead.”
Hark! an upward shout is sent:
In grave, strong joy from tower to steeple
The bells ring out,
The trumpets sound, the people shout,
The young queen goes to her parliament;
She turneth round her large blue eyes,
More bright with childish memories
Than royal hope, upon the people;
On either side she bows her head
Lowly, with a queenly grace,
And smile most trusting-innocent,
As if she smiled upon her mother;
The thousands press before each other
To bless her to her face;
And booms the deep majestic voice
Through trumpe and drum, “May
the queen rejoice
In the people's liberties !”

III.

I dwell amid the city,
And hear the flow of souls in act
and speech,
For pomp or trade, for merrymake or folly:
I hear the confluence and sum of each,
And that is melancholy !
Thy voice is a complaint, O crowned city,
The blue sky covering thee like God's great pity.

IV.

O blue sky ! it mindeth me
Of places where I used to see
Its vast unbroken circle thrown
From the far pale-peaked hill
Out to the last verge of ocean,

As by God's arm it were done
Them for the first time, with the emotion
Of that first impulse on it still.
Oh we spirits fly at will
Faster than the winged steed
Whereof in old book we read,
With the sunlight foaming back
From his flanks to a misty wrack,
And his nostril reddening proud
As he breasteth the steep thunder cloud, —
Smoothen than Sabrina's chair,
Gliding up from wave to air,
While she smileth debonair
Yet holy, coldly and yet brightly,
Like her own mooned waters
nightly,
Through her dripping hair.

v.

Very fast and smooth we fly,
Spirits, though the flesh be by:
All looks feed not from the eye,
Nor all hearings from the ear:
We can hearken and espy
Without either, we can journey
Bold and gay as knight to tourney;
And, though we wear no visor
down
To dark our countenance, the foe
Shall never chafe us as we go.

vi.

I am gone from peopled town !
It posseth its street-thunder round
My body which yet hears no sound;
For now another sound, another
Vision, my soul's senses have —
O'er a hundred valleys deep
Where the hills' green shadows sleep,
Scarce known because the valley-trees
Cross those upland images,
O'er a hundred hills each other,
Watching to the western wave,
I have travelled, — I have found
The silent, lone, remembered ground.

vii.

I have found a grassy niche
Hollowed in a seaside-hill,
As if the ocean-grandeur, which
Is aspectable from the place,
Had struck the hill as with a mace,
Sudden and cleaving. You might
fill

That little nook with the little cloud
Which sometimes lieth by the moon
To beautify a night of June,—
A cavelike nook, which, opening all
To the wide sea, is disallowed
From its own earth's sweet pastoral;
Cavelike, but roofless overhead,
And made of verdant banks instead
Of any rocks, with flowerets spread
Instead of spar and stalactite,
Cowslips and daisies gold and white;
Such pretty flowers on such green sward,
You think the sea they look toward
Doth serve them for another sky,
As warm and blue as that on high.

VII.

And in this hollow is a seat,
And when you shall have crept to it,
Slipping down the banks too steep
To be o'erbrowsèd by the sheep,
Do not think—though at your feet
The cliff's disrupt—you shall behold
The line where earth and ocean meet:
You sit too much above to view
The solemn confluence of the two:
You can hear them as they greet,
You can hear that evermore
Distance-softened noise more old
Than Nereid's singing, the tide spent
Joining soft issues with the shore
In harmony of discontent;
And when you hearken to the grave
Lamenting of the underwave,
You must believe in earth's communion,
Albeit you witness not the union.

IX.

Except that sound, the place is full
Of silences, which, when you call
By any word, it thrills you so,
That presently you let them grow
To meditation's fullest length
Across your soul, with a soul's strength:
And, as they touch your soul, they borrow
Both of its grandeur and its sorrow,
That deathly odor which the clay
Leaves on its deathlessness alway.

X.

Alway! alway? must this be?
Rapid Soul from city gone,
Dost thou carry inwardly
What doth make the city's moan?
Must this deep sigh of thine own
Haunt thee with humanity?
Green visioned banks that are too steep
To be o'erbrowsèd by the sheep,
May all sad thoughts adown you creep
Without a shepherd? Mighty sea,
Can we dwarf thy magnitude?
And fit it to our straitest mood?
O fair, fair Nature, are we thus
Impotent and querulous
Among thy workings glorious,
Wealth and sanctities, that still
Leave us vacant and defiled,
And wailing like a soft-kissed child,
Kissed soft against his will?

XI.

God, God!
With a child's voice I cry,
Weak, sad, confidingly—
God, God!

Thou knowest, eyelids raised not always up
Unto thy love (as none of ours are) droop
As ours o'er many a tear;
Thou knowest, though thy universe is broad,
Two little tears suffice to cover all;
Thou knowest, thou who art so prodigal
Of beauty, we are oft but stricken deer
Expiring in the woods, that care for none
Of those delightsome flowers they die upon.

XII.

O blissful Mouth which breathed the mournful breath
We name our souls, self-spoil'd! by that strong passion
Which paled thee once with sighs, by that strong death
Which made thee once unbreathing, from the wrack
They themselves have called around them, call them back,—
Back to thee in continuous aspiration!
For here, O Lord,

For here they travel vainly, vainly
 pass
From city-pavement to untrodden
 sward
Where the lark finds her deep nest in
 the grass
Cold with the earth's last dew. Yea,
 very vain
The greatest speed of all these souls
 of men
Unless they travel upward to the
 throne
Where sittest THOU the satisfying
 ONE,
With help for sins and holy perfect-
 ings
For all requirements; while the arch-
 angel, raising
Unto thy face his full ecstatic gazing,
Forgets the rush and rapture of his
 wings.

(For surging souls no worlds can
 bound,
Their channel in the heart have
 found.)

IV.

O child, to change appointed,
Thou hadst not second-sight!
What eyes the future view aright
 Unless by tears anointed?
Yea, only tears themselves can show
The burning ones that have to flow.

V.

O woman, deeply loving,
Thou hadst not second-sight!
The star is very high and bright,
 And none can see it moving.
Love looks around, below, above,
Yet all his prophecy is—love.

VI.

The bird thy childhood's playing
Sent onward o'er the sea,
Tly dove of hope, came back to thee
 Without a leaf: art laying
It's wet, cold wing no sun can dry,
Still in thy bosom secretly?

VII.

Our Goethe's friend, Bettine,
I have the second-sight!
The stone upon his grave is white,
 The funeral stone between ye;
And in thy mirror thou hast viewed
Some change as hardly understood.

VIII.

Where's childhood? where is
Goethe?
The tears are in thine eyes.
Nay, thou shalt yet re-organize
 Thy maidenhood of beauty
In his own glory, which is smooth
Of wrinkles, and sublime in youth.

IX.

The poet's arms have wound thee,
He breathes upon thy brow,
He lifts thee upward in the glow
 Of his great genius round thee,
The childlike poet undefined
Preserving evermore THE CHILD.

TO BETTINE.

THE CHILD-FRIEND OF GOETHE.

"I have the second-sight, Goethe!" — *Letters
of a Child.*

I.

BETTINE, friend of Goethe,
Hadst thou the second-sight—
Upturning worship and delight
 With such a loving duty
To his grand face, as women will,
The childhood 'neath thine eyelids
 still?

II.

— Before his shrine to doom thee,
Using the same child's smile
That heaven and earth, beheld ere-
 while
 For the first time, won from thee
Ere star and flower grew dim and
 dead
Save at his feet, and o'er his head?

III.

— Digging thine heart, and throw-
 ing
Away its childhood's gold,
That so its woman-depth might hold
 His spirit's overflowing?

MAN AND NATURE.

A SAD man on a summer day
Did look upon the earth, and say,—
“Purple cloud the hilltop binding;
Folded hills, the valleys wind in;
Valleys, with fresh streams among
you;
Streams, with bosky trees along you;
Trees, with many birds and blossoms;
Birds, with music-trembling bosoms;
Blossoms, dropping dews that wreath
you
To your fellow-flowers beneath you;
Flowers, that constellate on earth;
Earth, that shakest to the mirth
Of the merry Titan ocean,
All his shining hair in motion! —
Why am I thus the only one
Who can be dark beneath the sun? ”
But, when the summer day was past,
He looked to heaven, and smiled at
last,
Self-answered so.— “ Because, O cloud,
Pressing with thy crumpled shroud
Heavily on mountain-top;
Hills, that almost seem to drop,
Stricken with a misty death,
To the valleys underneath;
Valleys, sighing with the torrent;
Waters, streaked with branches hor-
rent;
Branchless trees, that shake your head
Wildly o'er your blossoms spread
Where the common flowers are
found;
Flowers, with foreheads to the
ground;
Ground, that shrillest while the sea
With his iron smiteth thee,—
I am, besides, the only one
Who can be bright *without* the sun.”

A SEASIDE WALK.

I.
We walked beside the sea,
After a day which perished silently
Of its own glory, like the princess
weird,
Who, combating the Genius, scorched
and seared,

Uttered with burning breath, “ Ho!
victory! ”
And sank adown, a heap of ashes pale:
So runs the Arab tale.

II.
The sky above us showed
A universal and unmoving cloud
On which the cliffs permitted us to
see
Only the outline of their majesty,
As master-minds when gazed at by
the crowd;
And, shining with a gloom, the water
gray
Swang in its moon-taught way.

III.
Nor moon nor stars were out;
They did not dare to tread so soon
about,
Though trembling, in the footsteps of
the sun;
The light was neither night's nor
day's, but one
Which, life-like, had a beauty in its
doubt;
And silence's impassioned breathings
round
Seemed wandering into sound.

IV.
O solemn-beating heart
Of nature! I have knowledge that
thou art
Bound unto man's by cords he cannot
sever:
And, what time they are slackened
by him ever,
So to attest his own supernal part,
Still runneth thy vibration fast, and
strong
The slackened cord along;

V.
For though we never spoke
Of the gray water and the shaded
rock,
Dark wave and stone unconsciously
were fused
Into the plaintive speaking that we
used
Of absent friends, and memories un-
forsook;
And, had we seen each other's face,
we had
Seen haply each was sad.

THE SEA-MEW.

AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED TO
M. E. H.

I.

How joyously the young sea-mew
Lay dreaming on the waters blue
Whereon our little bark had thrown
A little shade, the only one;
But shadows ever man pursue.

II.

Familiar with the waves, and free
As if their own white foam were he,
His heart, upon the heart of ocean,
Lay, learning all its mystic motion,
And throbbing to the throbbing sea.

III.

And such a brightness in his eye,
As if the ocean and the sky
Within him had lit up, and nurst
A soul God gave him not at first,
To comprehend their majesty.

IV.

We were not cruel, yet did sunder
His white wing from the blue waves
under,
And boud it, while his fearless eyes
Shone up to ours in calm surprise,
As deeming us some ocean wonder.

V.

We bore our ocean bird unto
A grassy place where he might view
The flowers that courtesy to the bees,
The waving of the tall green trees,
The falling of the silver dew.

VI.

But flowers of earth were pale to him
Who had seen the rainbow fishes
swim;
And when earth's dew around him lay,
He thought of ocean's winged spray,
And his eye waxed sad and dim.

VII.

The green trees round him only made
A prison with their darksome shade;
And drooped his wing, and mournèd he
For his own boundless glittering sea,
Albeit he knew not they could fade.

VIII.

Then one her gladsome face did bring,
Her gentle voice's murmurring,
In ocean's stead his heart to move,
And teach him what was human love:
He thought it a strange, mournful
thing.

IX.

He lay down in his grief to die
(First looking to the sea-like sky
That hath no waves), because, alas!
Our human touch did on him pass,
And, with our touch, our agony.

FELICIA HEMANS.

TO L. E. L., REFERRING TO HER
MONODY ON THE POETESS.

I.

Thou bay-crowned living one that
o'er the bay-crowned dead art
bowing,
And o'er the shadeless, moveless brow
the vital shadow throwing,
And o'er the sighless, songless lips the
wail and music wedding,
And dropping o'er the tranquil eyes
the tears not of their shedding! —

II.

Take music from the silent dead,
whose meaning is completer,
Reserve thy tears for living brows,
where all such tears are meeter,
And leave the violets in the grass to
brighten where thou treadest:
No flowers for her! no need of flow-
ers, albeit "bring flowers,"
thou saidest.

III.

Yes, flowers to crown the "cup and
lute," since both may come to
breaking;
Or flowers to greet the "bride"—the
heart's own beating works its
aching;

Or flowers to soothe the "captive's" sight,
From earth's free bosom gathered,
Reminding of his earthly hope, then
Withering as it withered:

IV.

But bring not near the solemn corse
A type of human seeming;
Lay only dust's stern verity upon the
dust undreaming:
And, while the calm perpetual stars
shall look upon it solely,
Her sphered soul shall look on *them*
with eyes more bright and holy.

V.

Nor mourn, O living one, because her
part in life was mourning:
Would she have lost the poet's fire
for anguish of the burning?
The minstrel harp, for the strained
string? the tripod, for the af-
fated
Woe? or the vision, for those tears in
which it shone dilated?

VI.

Perhaps she shuddered while the
world's cold hand her brow was
wreathing,
But never wronged that mystic breath
which breathed in all her
breathing,
Which drew from rocky earth and
man abstractions high and
moving,—
Beauty, if not the beautiful, and love,
if not the loving.

VII.

Such visionings have paled in sight:
the Saviour she descrieth,
And little recks *who* wreathed the
brow which on his bosom lieth:
The whiteness of his innocence o'er
all her garments flowing,
There learneth she the sweet "new
song" she will not mourn in
knowing.

VIII.

Be happy, crowned and living one!
and, as thy dust decayeth,
May thine own England say for thee
what now for her it sayeth,—

"Albeit softly in our ears her silver
song was ringing,
The footfall of her parting soul is
softer than her singing."

L. E. L'S LAST QUES-
TION.

"Do you think of me as I think of you?"
Written during the voyage to the Cape.

I.
"Do you think of me as I think of
you,
My friends, my friends?" She said it
from the sea,
The English minstrel in her min-
strelsy,
While, under brighter skies than erst
she knew,
Her heart grew dark, and groped
there as the blind
To reach across the waves friends
left behind—
"Do you think of me as I think of
you?"

II.

It seemed not much to ask — "as I of
you?"
We all do ask the same: no eyelids
cover
Within the meekest eyes that ques-
tion over:
And little in the world the loving
do
But sit (among the rocks?) and listen
for
The echo of their own love ever-
more—
"Do you think of me as I think of
you?"

III.

Love-learnèd she had sung of love
and love,—
And like a child, that, sleeping with
dropt head
Upon the fairy-book he lately read,
Whatever household noises round
him move,

Hears in his dream some elfin turbulence,—
Even so, suggestive to her inward sense,
All sounds of life assumed one tune of love.

IV.

And when the glory of her dream withdrew,
When knightly gestes and courtly pageantries

Were broken in her visionary eyes
By tears the solemn seas attested true,
Forgetting that sweet lute beside her hand,
She asked not, "Do you praise me, O my land?"
But, "Think ye of me, friends; as I of you?"

V.

Hers was the hand that played for many a year
Love's silver phrase for England, smooth and well.
Would God, her heart's more inward oracle
In that lone moment might confirm her dear!
For when her questioned friends in agony
Made passionate response, "We think of thee,"
Her place was in the dust, too deep to hear.

VI.

Could she not wait to catch their answering breath?
Was she content, content, with ocean's sound,
Which dashed its mocking infinite around
One thirsty for a little love?— beneath
Those stars content, where last her song had gone,—
They mute and cold in radiant life, as soon
Their singer was to be in darksome death?

VII.

Bring your vain answers; cry, "We think of thee!"
How think ye of her? — warm in long ago

¹ Her lyric on the polar star came home with her latest papers.

Delights? or crowned with budding bays? Not so.
None smile, and none are crowned, where lieth she,
With all her visions unfulfilled save one,
Her childhood's, of the palm-trees in the sun—
And lo! their shadow on her sepulchre!

VIII.

"Do ye think of me as I think of you?"—
O friends, O kindred, O dear brotherhood
Of all the world! what are we that we should
For covenants of long affection sue?
Why press so near each other when the touch
Is barred by graves? Not much, and yet too much,
Is this, "Think of me as I think of you."

IX.

But while on mortal lips I shape anew
A sigh to mortal issues, verily
Above the unshaken stars that see us die
A vocal pathos rolls; and HE who drew
All life from dust, and for all tasted death,
By death and life and love, appealing saith,
"Do you think of me as I think of you?"

CROWNED AND WEDDED.

I.

WHEN last before her people's face her own fair face she bent,
Within the meek projection of that shade she was content
To erase the child-smile from her lips, which seemed as if it might
Be still kept holy from the world to childhood still in sight —

To erase it with a solemn vow, a princely vow — to rule,
A priestly vow — to rule by grace of God the pitiful,
A very godlike vow — to rule in right and righteousness,
And with the law and for the land — so God the vower bless!

II.

The minster was alight that day, but not with fire, I ween;
And long-drawn glitterings swept adown that mighty aisled scene;
The priests stood stoled in their pomp, the sworded chiefs in theirs,
And so the collared knights, and so the civii ministers,
And so the waiting lords and dames, and little pages best
At holding trauns, and legates so, from countries east and west;
So alien princes, native peers, and high-born ladies bright,
Along whose brows the Queen's, now crowned, flashed coronets to light;
And so the people at the gates with priestly hands on high,
Which bring the first anointing to all legal majesty;
And so the Dead, who lie in rows beneath the minster floor,
There verily an awful state maintaining evermore;
The statesman whose clean palm will kiss no bribe, whate'er it be,
The courtier who for no fair queen will rise up to his knee,
The court-dame who for no court-tire will leave her shroud behind,
The laureate, who no courtlier rhyme than "dust to dust" can find,
The kings and queens who having made that vow and worn that crown,
Descended unto lower thrones, and darker, deep adown:
Dieu et mon droit — what is't to them? — what meaning can it have? —
The King of kings, the right of death — God's judgment and the grave.
And when betwixt the quick and dead the young fair queen had vowed,
The living shouted, "May she live! Victoria, live!" aloud:

And, as the loyal shouts went up, true spirits prayed between,
"The blessings happy monarchs have be thine, O crowned queen!"

III.

But now before her people's face she bentheth hers anew,
And calls them, while she vows, to be her witness thereunto.
She vowed to rule, and in that oath her childhood put away:
She doth maintain her womanhood, in vowing love to-day.
O lovely lady! let her vow! such lips become such vows,
And fairer goeth bridal wreath than crown with vernal brows.
O lovely lady! let her vow! yea, let her vow to love!
And though she be no less a queen, with purples hung above,
The pageant of a court behind, the royal kin around,
And woven gold to catch her looks turned maidenly to ground,
Yet may the bride-veil hide from her a little of that state,
While loving hopes for retinues about her sweetness wait.
SHE vows to love who vowed to rule
— (the chosen at her side)
Let none say, God preserve the queen! but rather, Bless the bride!
None blow the trump, none bend the knee, none violate the dream
Wherein no monarch but a wife she to herself may seem.
Or if ye say, Preserve the queen! O, breathe it inward low —
She is a woman, and beloved! and 'tis enough but so.
Count it enough, thou noble prince who tak'st her by the hand,
And claimest for thy lady-love our lady of the land!
And since, Prince Albert, men have called thy spirit high and rare,
And true to truth and brave for truth as some at Augsburg were,
We charge thee by thy lofty thoughts and by thy poet-mind,
Which not by glory and degree takes measure of mankind,
Istearn that wedded hand less dear for sceptre than for ring,
And hold her uncrowned womanhood to be the royal thing.

IV.

And now, upon our queen's last vow
what blessings shall we pray?
None straitened to a shallow crown
will suit our lips to-day:
Behold, they must be free as love, they
must be broad as free,
Even to the borders of heaven's light
and earth's humanity,
Long live she! — send up loyal shouts,
and true hearts pray between,
“The blessings happy PEASANTS have,
be thine, O crowned queen!”

CROWNED AND BURIED.

I.

NAPOLEON! — years ago, and that
great word,
Compact of human breath in hate and
dread
And exultation, skied us overhead,—
An atmosphere whose lightning was
the sword
Seathing the cedars of the world,—
drawn down
In burnings by the metal of a crown.

II.

Napoleon! — nations, while they
cursed that name,
Shook at their own curse; and while
others bore
Its sound, as of a trumpet, on before,
Brass-fronted legions justified its
fame;
And dying men on trampled battle-
sods
Near their last silence uttered it for
God's.

III.

Napoleon! — sages, with high fore-
heads drooped,
Did use it for a problem; children
small
Leapt up to greet it, as at manhood's
call;
Priests blessed it from their altars
overstooped

By meek-eyed Christs; and widows
with a moan
Spake it, when questioned why they
sate alone.

IV.

That name consumed the silence of
the snows
In Alpine keeping, holy and cloud-
hid;
The mimic eagles dared what Nature's
did,
And over-rushed her mountainous re-
pose
In search of eyries; and the Egyptian
river
Mingled the same word with its grand
“Forever.”

V.

That name was shouted near the py-
ramidal
Nilotic tombs, whose mummied habit-
ants,
Packed to humanity's significance,
Motioned it back with stillness,—
shouts as idle
As hireling artists' work of myrrh and
spice
Which swathed last glories round the
Ptolemies.

VI.

The world's face changed to hear it;
kingly men
Came down in chidden babes' bewil-
derment
From autocratic places, each content
With sprinkled ashes for anointing;
then
The people laughed, or wondered for
the nonce,
To see one throne a composite of
thrones.

VII.

Napoleon! — even the torrid vasti-
tude
Of India felt in throbings of the air
That name which scattered by disas-
trous blare
All Europe's bound-lines, — drawn
afresh in blood.
Napoleon! — from the Russias west to
Spain,
And Austria trembled till ye heard
her chain;

VIII.

And Germany was 'ware; and Italy,
Oblivious of old fames,—her laurel-
locked,
High-ghosted Cæsars passing unin-
voked,—
Did crumble her own ruins with her
knee,
To serve a newer: ay! but French-
men cast
A future from them nobler than her
past:

IX.

For verily, though France augustly
rose
With that raised NAME, and did as-
sume by such
The purple of the world, none gave so
much
As she in purchase—to speak plain,
in loss—
Whose hands, toward freedom
stretched, dropped paralyzed
To wield a sword, or fit an under-
sized

X.

King's crown to a great man's head.
And though along
Her Paris streets did float, on fre-
quent streams
Of triumph, pictured or emmarbled
dreams
Dreamt right by genius in a world
gone wrong,
No dream of all so won was fair to
see
As the lost vision of her liberty.

XI.

Napoleon! — 'twas a high name lifted
high:
It met at last God's thunder sent to
clear
Our compassing and covering atmos-
phere,
And open a clear sight beyond the
sky
Of supreme empire; this of earth's
was done—
And kings crept out again to feel the
sun.

XII.

The kings crept out: the peoples sate
at home,
And, finding the long-invocated peace

(A pall embroidered with worn im-
ages
Of rights divine) too scant to cover
doom
Such as they suffered, cursed the corn
that grew
Rankly to bitter bread on Waterloo.

XIII.

A deep gloom centred in the deep
repose;
The nations stood up mute to count
their dead:
And he who owned the NAME which
vibrated
Through silence, trusting to his no-
Flest foes
When earth was all too gray for chiv-
alry,
Died of their mercies 'mid the desert
sea.

XIV.

O wild St. Helen! very still she kept
him,
With a green willow for all pyramid,
Which stirred a little if the low wind
did,
A little more, if pilgrims overwept
him,
Disparting the litho boughs to see the
clay
Which seemed to cover his for judg-
ment-day.

XV.

Nay, not so long! France kept her
old affection
As deeply as the sepulchre the corse;
Until, dilated by such love's remorse
To a new angel of the resurrection,
She cried, "Behold, thou England! I
would have
The dead whereof thou wottest, from
that grave."

XVI.

And England answered in the cour-
tesy
Which, ancient foes turned lovers,
may befit.—
"Take back thy dead! and, when
thou buriest it,
Throw in all former strifes 'twixt thee
and me."
Amen, mine England! 'tis a courte-
ous claim:
But ask a little room too—for thy
shame!

xvii.

Because it was not well, it was not well,
Nor tuneful with thy lofty-chanted part
Among the Oceanides,— that heart
To bind and bare and vex with vulture fell.
I would, my noble England, men
might seek
All crimson stains upon thy breast—
not cheek!

xviii.

I would that hostile fleets had scarred
Torbay,
Instead of the lone ship which waited moored
Until thy princely purpose was assured,
Then left a shadow, not to pass away—
Not for to-night's moon, nor to-morrow's sun:
Green watching hills, ye witnessed what was done!¹

xix.

But since it was done,— in sepulchral dust
We fain would pay back something of our debt
To France, if not to honor, and forget
How through much fear we falsified the trust
Of a fallen foe and exile. We return
Orestes Electra—in his urn.

xx.

A little urn—a little dust inside,
Which once outbalanced the large earth, albeit
To-day a four-years' child might carry it
Sleek-browed and smiling, “ Let the burden 'bide ! ”
Orestes to Electra! — O fair town
Of Paris, how the wild tears will run down

xxi.

And run back in the chariot-marks of time,
When all the people shall come forth to meet

¹ Written at Torquay.

The passive victor, death-still in the street
He rode through 'mid the shouting and bell-chime,
And martial music, under eagles which
Dyed their rapacious beaks at Austerlitz!

xxii.

Napoleon! — he hath come again, borne home
Upon the popular ebbing heart, — a sea
Which gathers its own wrecks perpetually,
Majestically moaning. Give him room!
Room for the dead in Paris! welcome solemn
And grave-deep 'neath the cannon-moulded column!¹

xxiii.

There, weapon-spent and warrior-spent, may rest
From roar of fields,— provided Jupiter
Dare trust Saturnus to lie down so near
His bolts! — and this he may; for, dispossessed
Of any godship lies the godlike arm—
The goat Jove sucked as likely to do harm.

xxiv.

And yet . . . Napoleon! — the recovered name
Shakes the old casements of the world; and we
Look out upon the passing pageantry,
Attesting that the Dead makes good his claim
To a French grave,— another kingdom won,
The last, of few spans— by Napoleon.

xxv.

Blood fell like dew beneath his sunrise—sooth!
But glittered dew-like in the covenanted
Meridian light. He was a despot—granted!

¹ It was the first intention to bury him under the column.

But the *avros* of his autocratic mouth
Said yea i' the people's French: he
magnified
The image of the freedom he denied.

xxvi.

And if they asked for rights, he made reply,
"Ye have my glory!" — and so,
drawing round them
His ample purple, glorified and bound them
In an embrace that seemed identity.
He ruled them like a tyrant — true!
but none
Were ruled like slaves: each felt
Napoleon.

xxvii.

I do not praise this man: the man
was flawed
For Adam — much more, Christ! —
his knee unbent,
His hand unclean, his aspiration pent
Within a sword-sweep — pshaw! —
but, since he had
The genius to be loved, why; let him
have
The justice to be honored in his
grave.

xxviii.

I think this nation's tears thus poured
together
Better than shouts. I think this fu-
neral
Grander than crownings, though a
pope bless all.
I think this grave stronger than
thrones. But, whether
The crowned Napoleon or the buried
clay
Be worthier, I discern not: angels
may.

TO FLUSH MY DOG.

I.

LOVING friend, the gift of one
Who her own true faith has run
Through thy lower nature,¹

¹ This dog was the gift of my dear and admired friend, Miss Mitford, and belongs to the beautiful race she has rendered celebrated among English and American read-

Be my benediction said
With my hand upon thy head,
Gentle fellow-creature!

II.

Like a lady's ringlets brown,
Flow thy silken ears adown
Either side demurely
Of thy silver-suited breast,
Shining out from all the rest
Of thy body purely.

III.

Darkly brown thy body is,
Till the sunshine striking this
Alchemize its dulness,
When the sleek curls manifold
Flash all over into gold
With a burnished fulness.

IV.

Underneath my stroking hand,
Startled eyes of hazel bland
Kindling, growing larger,
Up thou leapest with a spring,
Full of prank and curvetting,
Leaping like a charger.

V.

Leap! thy broad tail waves a light,
Leap! thy slender feet are bright,
Canopied in fringes;
Leap! those tasselled ears of thine
Flicker strangely, fair and fine
Down their golden inches.

VI.

Yet, my pretty sportive friend,
Little is't to such an end
That I praise thy rareness:
Other dogs may be thy peers
Haply in these drooping ears
And this glossy fairness.

VII.

But of *thee* it shall be said,
This dog watched beside a bed
Day and night unwearied, —
Watched within a curtained room
Where no sunbeam brake the gloom,
Round the sick and dreary.
ers. The Flushes have their laurels as well as the Caesars, the chief difference (at least the very head and front of it) consisting, perhaps, in the bald head of the latter under the crown. 1844.

VIII.

Roses, gathered for a vase,
In that chamber died apace,
Beam and breeze resigning:
This dog only waited on,
Knowing, that, when light is gone,
Love remains for shining.

IX.

Other dogs in thymy dew
Tracked the hares, and followed
through
Sunny moor or meadow:
This dog only crept and crept
Next a languid cheek that slept,
Sharing in the shadow.

X.

Other dogs of loyal cheer
Bounded at the whistle clear,
Up the woodside lieing:
This dog only watched in reach
Of a faintly uttered speech,
Or a louder sighing.

XI.

And if one or two quick tears
Dropped upon his glossy ears,
Or a sigh came double,
Up he sprang in eager haste,
Fawning, fondling, breathing fast,
In a tender trouble.

XII.

And this dog was satisfied
If a pale, thin hand would glide
Down his dewlaps sloping,—
Which he pushed his nose within,
After,—platforming his chin
On the palm left open.

XIII.

This dog, if a friendly voice
Call him now to blither choice
Than such chamber-keeping,
“Come out!” praying from the door,
Presseth backward as before,
Up against me leaping.

XIV.

Therefore to this dog will I,
Tenderly not scornfully,
Render praise and favor:

With my hand upon his head,
Is my benediction said
Therefore and forever.

XV.

And because he loves me so,
Better than his kind will do
Often man or woman,
Give I back more love again
Than dogs often take of men,
Leaning from my human.

XVI.

Blessings on thee, dog of mine,
Pretty collars make thee fine,
Sugared milk make fat thee!
Pleasures wag on in thy tail,
Hands of gentle motion fail
Nevermore to pat thee!

XVII.

Downy pillow take thy head,
Silken coverlet bestead,
Sunshine help thy sleeping!
No fly’s buzzing wake thee up,
No man break thy purple cup
Set for drinking deep in!

XVIII.

Whiskered cats aroynted flec,
Sturdy stoppers keep from thee
Cologne distillations;
Nuts lie in thy path for stones,
And thy feast-day macaroons
Turn to daily rations!

XIX.

Mock I thee, in wishing weal?
Tears are in my eyes to feel
Thou art made so straitly:
Blessings need must straiten too,—
Little canst thou joy or do,
Thou who lovest greatly.

XX.

Yet be blessed to the height
Of all good and all delight
Pervious to thy nature;
Only loved beyond that line,
With a love that answers thine,
Loving fellow-creature!

THE DESERTED GARDEN.

I MIND me, in the days departed,
How often underneath the sun
With childish bounds I used to run
To a garden long deserted.

The beds and walks were vanished
quite;
And whereso'er had struck the spade,
The greenest grasses Nature laid
To sanctify her right.

I called the place my wilderness,
For no one entered there but I:
The sheep looked in the grass to espy,
And passed it ne'ertheless.

The trees were interwoven wild,
And spread their boughs enough
about
To keep both sheep and shepherd out,
But not a happy child.

Adventurous joy it was for me !
I crept beneath the boughs, and found
A circle smooth of mossy ground
Beneath a poplar-tree.

Old garden rose-trees hedged it in,
Bedropt with roses waxen-white
Well satisfied with dew and light,
And careless to be seen.

Long years ago, it might befall,
When all the garden-flowers were
trim,
The grave old gardener prided him
On these the most of all.

Some lady, stately overmuch,
Here moving with a silken noise,
Has blushed beside them at the voice
That likened her to such.

And these, to make a diadem,
She often may have plucked and
twined,
Half-smiling as it came to mind
That few would look at *them*.

Oh, little thought that lady proud,
A child would watch her fair white
rose,
When buried lay her whiter brows,
And silk was changed for shroud !

Nor thought that gardener (full of
scorus
For men unlearned and simple
phrase),
A child would bring it all its praise
By creeping through the thorns.

To me upon my low moss seat,
Though never a dream the roses sent
Of science or love's compliment,
I ween they smelt as sweet.

It did not move my grief to see
The trace of human step departed:
Because the garden was deserted,
The blither place for me.

Friends, blame me not ! a narrow ken
Has childhood 'twixt the sun and
sward:

We draw the moral afterward,
We feel the gladness then.

And gladdest hours for me did glide
In silence at the rose-tree wall:
A thrush made gladness musical
Upon the other side.

Nor he nor I did e'er incline
To peck or pluck the blossoms white:
How should I know but roses might
Lead lives as glad as mine ?

To make my hermit-home complete,
I brought clear water from the spring
Praised in its own low murmuring,
And cresses glossy wet.

And so, I thought, my likeness grew
(Without the melancholy tale)
To "gentle hermit of the dale,"
And Angelina too.

For oft I read within my nook
Such minstrel stories, till the breeze
Made sounds poetic in the trees,
And then I shut the book.

If I shut this wherein I write,
I hear no more the wind athwart
Those trees, nor feel that childish
heart
Delighting in delight.

My childhood from my life is parted,
My footstep from the moss which
drew
Its fairy circle round: anew
The garden is deserted.

Another thrush may there rehearse
The madrigals which sweetest are:
No more for me! myself afar
Do sing a sadder verse.

Ah me, ah me! when erst I lay
In that child's-nest so greenly
wrought,
I laughed unto myself, and thought
"The time will pass away."

And still I laughed, and did not fear
But that, whene'er was passed away
The childish time, some happier play
My womanhood would e'er.

I knew the time would pass away,
And yet, beside the rose-tree wall,
Dear God, how seldom, if at all.
Did I look up to pray!

The time is past; and now that grows
The cypress high among the trees,
And I behold white sepulchres,
As well as the white rose,—

When graver, meeker thoughts are
given,
And I have learnt to lift my face,
Reminded how earth's greenest place
The color draws from heaven,—

It something saith for earthly pain,
But more for heavenly promise free,
That I who was, would shrink to be
That happy child again.

And glittering eyes that showed
their right
To general nature's deep delight.

And God them taught at every close
Of murmuring waves beyond
And green leaves round, to interpose
Their choral voices fond,
Interpreting that love must be
The meaning of the earth and sea.

Fit ministers! Of living loves
Theirs hath the calmest fashion,
Their living voice the liklest moves
To lifeless intonation
The lovely monotone of springs
And winds and such insensate things.

My little doves were ta'en away
From that glad nest of theirs,
Across an ocean rolling gray,
And tempest-clonded airs,—
My little doves, who lately knew
The sky and wave by warmth and
blue.

And now, within the city prison,
In mist and chillness pent,
With sudden upward look they listen
For sounds of past content, —
For lapse of wafer, swell of breeze,
Or nut-fruit falling from the trees.

The stir without the glow of passion,
The triumph of the mart,
The gold and silver as they clash on
Man's cold metallic heart,
The roar of wheels, the cry for bread:
These only sounds are heard instead.

Yet still, as on my human hand
Their fearless heads they lean,
And almost seem to understand
What human musings mean,
(Their eyes with such a plaintive
shine
Are fastened upwardly to mine!)

Soft falls their chant as on the nest
Beneath the sunny zone;
For love that stirred it in their breast
Has not awearily grown,
And 'neath the city's shade can keep
The well of music clear and deep.

And love that keeps the music fills
With pastoral memories;
All echoings from out the hills,

MY DOVES.

"O Weisheit! Du red'st wie eine Taube!"
GOETHE.

My little doves have left a nest
Upon an Indian tree,
Whose leaves fantastic take their rest
Or motion from the sea;
For ever there the sea-winds go
With sunlit paces to and fro.

The tropic flowers looked up to it,
The tropic stars looked down;
And there my little doves did sit,
With feathers softly brown,

All droppings from the skies,
All flowings from the wave and wind,
Remembered in their chant, I find.

So teach ye me the wisest part,
My little doves ! to move
Along the city-ways with heart
Assured by holy love,
And vocal with such songs as own
A fountain to the world unknown.

'Twas hard to sing by Babel's
stream —
More hard in Babel's street;
But if the soulless creatures deem
Their music not unmeet
For sunless walls, let us begin,
Who wear immortal wings within ! •

To me, fair memories belong
Of scenes that used to bless,
For no regret, but present song
And lasting thankfulness,
And very soon to break away,
Like types, in purer things than they.

I will have hopes that cannot fade,
For flowers the valley yields;
I will have humble thoughts instead
Of silent, dewy fields:
My spirit and my God shall be
My seaward hill, my boundless sea.

HECTOR IN THE GARDEN.

I.

NINE years old! The first of any
Seem the happiest years that come;
Yet when I was nine, I said
No such word ! I thought instead
That the Greeks had used as many
In besieging Ilium.

II.

Nine green years had scarcely brought
me
To my childhood's haunted spring:
I had life, like flowers and bees,
In betwixt the country trees;
And the sun the pleasure taught me
Which he teacheth every thing.

III.

If the rain fell, there was sorrow,
Little head leant on the pane,
Little finger drawing down it
The long trailing drops upon it,
And the "Rain, rain, come to-mor-
row,"
Said for charm against the rain.

IV.

Such a charm was right Canidian,
Though you meet it with a jeer:
If I said it long enough,
Then the rain hummed dimly off,
And the thrush with his pure Lydian
Was left only to the ear;

V.

And the sun and I together
Went a-rushing out of doors:
We our tender spirits drew
Over hill and dale in view,
Glimmering hither, glimmering thith-
er,
In the footsteps of the showers.

VI.

Underneath the chestnuts dripping,
Through the grasses wet and fair,
Straight I sought my garden-ground,
With the laurel on the mound,
And the pear-tree oversweeping
A side-shadow of green air.

VII.

In the garden lay supinely
A huge giant wrought of spade;
Arms and legs were stretched at
length
In a passive giant strength,—
The fine meadow-turf, cut finely,
Round them laid and interlaid. ..

VIII.

Call him Hector, son of Priam !
Such his title and degree.
With my rake I smoothed his brow,
Both his cheeks I weeded through;
But a rhymer such as I am,
Scarce can sing his dignity.

IX.

Eyes of gentianellas azure,
Staring, winking at the skies;
Nose of gillyflowers and box;
Scented grasses put for locks,
Which a little breeze at pleasure
Set a-waving round his eyes:

x.

Brazen helm of daffodillies,
With a glitter toward the light;
Purple violets for the mouth,
Breathing perfumes west and south;
And a sword of flashing lilies,
Holden ready for the fight:

xi.

And a breastplate made of daisies,
Closely fitting, leaf on leaf;
Periwinkles interlaced
Drawn for belt about the waist;
While the brown bees, humming
praises,
Shot their arrows round the chief.

xii.

And who knows (I sometimes wondered.)
If the disembodied soul
Of old Hector once of Troy
Might not take a dreary joy
Here to enter—if it thundered,
Rolling up the thunder-roll ?

xiii.

Rolling this way from Troy-ruin,
In this body rude and rife
Just to enter, and take rest
'Neath the daisies of the breast—
They, with tender roots, renewing
His heroic heart to life ?

xiv.

Who could know? I sometimes started
At a motion or a sound!
Did his mouth speak, naming Troy
With an orotororot?
Did the pulse of the Strong-hearted
Make the daisies tremble round?

xv.

It was hard to answer; often;
But the birds sang in the tree,
But the little birds sang bold
In the pear-tree green and old,
And my terror seemed to soften
Through the courage of their glee.

xvi.

Oh the birds, the tree, the ruddy
And white blossoms sleek with
rain!
Oh, my garden rich with pansies!

Oh, my childhood's bright romances!
All revive, like Hector's body,
And I see them stir again.

xvii.

And despite life's changes, chances,
And despite the deathbell's toll,
They press on me in full seeming:
Help, some angel! stay this dreaming!
As the birds sang in the branches,
Sing God's patience through my soul !

xviii.

That no dreamer, no neglecter
Of the present's work unsped,
I may wake up and be doing,
Life's heroic ends pursuing,
Though my past is dead as Hector,
And though Hector is twice dead

SLEEPING AND WATCHING.

i.

SLEMER on, baby, on the floor,
Tired of all the playing;
Sleep with smile the sweeter for
That you dropped away in.
On your curls' full roundness stand
Golden lights serenely;
One cheek pushed out by the hand
Folds the dimple inly:
Little head and little foot,
Heavy laid for pleasure,
Underneath the lids half-shut,
Slants the shining azure.
Open-soul in noonday sun,
So you lie and slumber;
Nothing evil having done,
Nothing can encumber.

ii.

I who cannot sleep as well,
Shall I sigh to view you?
Or sigh further to foretell
All that may undo you?

Nay, keep smiling, little child,
Ere the sorrow neareth:
I will smile too; patience mild
Pleasure's token wear eth.
Nay, keep sleeping before loss:
I shall sleep though losing—
As by cradle, so by cross,
Sure is the reposing.

III.

And God knows who sees us twain,
Child at childish leisure,
I am near as tired of pain
As you seem of pleasure.
Very soon too, by his grace
Gently wrapt around me,
Shall I show as calm a face,
Shall I sleep as soundly,—
Differing in this, that you
Clasp your playthings, sleeping,
While my hand shall drop the few
Given to my keeping;
Differing in this, that I
Sleeping shall be colder,
And in waking presently,
Brighter to beholder;
Differing in this beside
(Sleeper, have you heard me?)—
Do you move, and open wide
Eyes of wonder toward me?)—
That while you I thus recall
From your sleep, I solely,
Me from mine an angel shall,
With reverie holy.

SOUNDS.

Ηκουσας η ουκ ηκουσας; —
AESCHYLUS.

I.

HARKEN, harken!
The rapid river carrieth
Many noises underneath
The hoary ocean:
Teaching his solemnity
Sounds of inland life and glee
Learned beside the waving tree
When the winds in summer prank
Toss the shades from bank to bank,
And the quick rains, in emotion
Which rather gladdens earth than
grieves,

Count and visibly rehearse
The pulses of the universe
Upon the summer leaves—
Learned among the lilies straight,
When they bow them to the weight
Of many bees whose hidden hum
Seemeth from themselves to come —
Learned among the grasses green
Where the rustling mice are seen
By the gleaming, as they run,
Of their quick eyes in the sun;
And lazy sheep are browsing through
With their noses trailed in dew;
And the squirrel leaps adown,
Holding fast the filbert brown;
And the lark, with more of mirth
In his song than suits the earth,
Droppeth some in soaring high,
To pour the rest out in the sky;
While the woodland doves apart
In the copse's leafy heart,
Solitary, not ascetic,
Hidden and yet vocal, seem
Joining in a lovely psalm,
Man's despondence, nature's calm,
Half mystical and half pathetic,
Like a singing in a dream.¹
All these sounds the river telleth,
Softened to an undertone
Which even and anon he swelleth
By a burden of his own,
In the ocean's ear:
Ay, and ocean seems to hear
With an inward gentle scorn,
Smiling to his caverns worn.

II.

Harken, harken!
The child is shouting at his play
Just in the tramping funeral's way;
The widow moans as she turns aside
To shun the face of the blushing
bride,

¹ "While floating up bright forms ideal,
Mistress or friend, around me stream;
Half sense-supplied, and half unreal,
Like music mingling with a dream."

JOHN KENYON.

I do not doubt that the "music" of the two concluding lines mingled, though very unconsciously, with my own "dream," and gave their form and pressure to the above distich. The ideas however being sufficiently distinct, I am satisfied with sending this note to the press after my verses, and with acknowledging another obligation to the valued friend to whom I already owe so many. 1844.

While, shaking the tower of the ancient church,
The marriage-bells do swing;
And in the shadow of the porch
An idiot sits with his lean hands full
Of hedgerow flowers and a poet's skull,
Laughing loud and gibbering
Because it is so brown a thing,
While he sticketh the gaudy poppies red
In and out the senseless head
Where all sweet fancies grew instead.
And you may hear at the self-same time
Another poet who reads his rhyme,
Low as a brook in summer air,
Save when he droppeth his voice adown
To dream of the amaranthine crown
His mortal brows shall wear,
And a baby cries with a feeble sound
'Neath the weary weight of the life new-found;
And an old man groans—with his testament
Only half-signed—for the life that's spent;
And lovers twain do softly say,
As they sit on a grave, "For aye, for aye;"
And foemen twain, while Earth their mother
Looks greenly upward, curse each other;
A schoolboy drones his task, with looks
Cast over the page to the elm-tree-rooks;
A lonely student cries aloud
Eureka! clasping at his shroud;
A beldame's age-cracked voice doth sing
To a little infant slumbering;
A maid forgotten weeps alone,
Muffling her sobs on the trysting-stone;
A sick man wakes at his own mouth's wail;
A gossip coughs in her thrice-told tale;
A muttering gamester shakes the dice;
A reaper foretells good luck from the skies;
A monarch vows as he lifts his hand to them;
A patriot, leaving his native land to them

Cries to the world against perjured state;
A priest disserts
Upon linen skirts;
A sinner screams for one hope more;
A dancer's feet do palpitate
A piper's music out on the floor;
And nigh to the awful Dead, the living
Low speech and stealthy steps are giving,
Because he cannot hear;
And he who on that narrow bier
Has room enough is closely wound
In a silence piercing more than sound.

III.

Harken, harken!
God speaketh to thy soul,
Using the supreme voice which doth confound
All life with consciousness of Deity,
All senses into one,—
As the seer-saint of Patmos, loving John
(For whom did backward roll
The cloud-gate of the future) turned to see
The Voice which spake. It speaketh now,
Through the regular breath of the calm creation,
Through the moan of the creature's desolation
Striking, and in its stroke resembling
The memory of a solemn vow
Which pierceth the din of a festival
To one in the midst,—and he letteth fall
The cup with a sudden trembling.

IV.

Harken, harken!
God speaketh in thy soul,
Saying, "O thou that movest
With feeble steps across this earth of mine,
To break beside the fount thy golden bowl
And spill its purple wine,—
Look up to heaven and see how like
a scroll
My right hand hath thine immortality
In an eternal grasping! thou that lovest

The songful birds and grasses under-foot,
And also what change mars and tombs pollute —
I am the end of love! give love to *Me!*
O thou that sinnest, grace doth more abound
Than all thy sin! sit still beneath my rood,

And count the droppings of my victim-blood,
And seek none other sound!"

v.

Harken, harken!
Shall we hear the lapsing river
And our brother's sighing ever,
And not the voice of God?

SONNETS.

THE SOUL'S EXPRESSION.

With stammering lips and insufficient sound
I strive and struggle to deliver right
That music of my nature, day and night
With dream and thought and feeling interwound,
And only answering all the senses round
With octaves of a mystic depth and height
Which step out grandly to the infinite
From the dark edges of the sensual ground.
This song of soul I struggle to outbear
Through portals of the sense, sublime
and whole,
And utter all myself into the air;
But if I did it, as the thunder-roll
Breaks its own cloud, my flesh would perish there,
Before that dread apocalypse of soul.

THE SERAPII AND POET.

The seraph sings before the manifest God-One, and in the burning of the Seven,
And with the full life of consummate Heaven
Heaving beneath him like a mother's breast
Warm with her first-born's slumber in that nest.

The poet sings upon the earth grave-riven,
Before the naughty world, soon self-forgiven
For wronging him; and in the darkness prest
From his own soul by worldly weights.
Even so
Sing, seraph with the glory! heaven is high;
Sing, poet with the sorrow! earth is low;
The universe's inward voices cry
"Amen" to either song of joy and woe;
Sing, seraph, poet, sing on equally!

BEREAVEMENT.

WHEN some beloveds, 'neath whose eyelids lay
The sweet lights of my childhood, one by one,
Did leave me dark before the natural sun,
And I astonished fell, and could not pray,
A thought within me to myself did say,
"Is God less God, that *thou* art left undone?
Rise, worship, bless him in this sack-cloth spun,
As in that purple!" But I answered,
"Nay!"

What child his filial heart in words
can loose
If he behold his tender father raise
The hand that chastens sorely? can
he choose
But sob in silence with an upward
gaze? —
And *my* great Father, thinking fit to
bruise,
Discerns in speechless tears both
prayer and praise."

CONSOLATION.

ALL are not taken: there are left be-
hind
Living beloveds, tender looks to bring
And make the daylight still a happy
thing,
And tender voices to make soft the
wind:
But if it were not so, if I could find
No love in all the world for comfort-
ing,
Nor any path but hollowly did ring
Where "dust to dust" the love from
life disjoined,
And if, before those sepulchres un-
moving
I stood alone (as some forsaken lamb
Goes bleating up the moors in weary
dearth),
Crying, "Where are ye, O my loved
and loving?"
I know a Voice would sound,
"Daughter, I AM.
Can I suffice for HEAVEN and not for
earth?"

TO MARY RUSSELL MIT-
FORD.

IN HER GARDEN.

WHAT time I lay these rhymes anear
thy feet,
Benignant friend, I will not proudly
say
As better poets use, "These *flowers* I
lay,"
Because I would not wrong thy roses
sweet,
Blaspheming so their name. And
yet repeat

Thou, overleaning them this spring-
time day,
With heart as open to love as theirs to
May,
— "Low-rooted verse may reach some
heavenly heat,
Even like my blossoms, if as nature-
true,
Though not as precious." Thou art
unperplexed,
Dear friend, in whose dear writings
drops the dew,
And blow the natural airs, — thou,
who art next
To nature's self in cheering the world's
view,
To preach a sermon on so known a
text!

ON A PORTRAIT OF WORDS-
WORTH BY B. R. HAYDON.

Wordsworth upon Helvellyn! Let
the cloud
Ebb audibly along the mountain-wind,
Then break against the rock, and show
behind
The lowland valleys floating up to
crowd
The sense with beauty. He with
forehead bowed
And humble-lidded eyes, as one in-
clined
Before the sovereign thought of his own
mind,
And very meek with inspirations
proud,
Takes here his rightful place as poet-
priest
By the high altar, singing prayer and
prayer
To the higher Heavens. A noble vis-
ion free
Our Haydon's hand has flung out from
the mist:
No portrait this, with academic air!
This is the poet and his poetry.

PAST AND FUTURE.

My future will not copy fair my past
On any leaf but heaven's. Be fully
done,
Supernal Will! I would not fain be
one,

Who, satisfying thirst and breaking fast,
Upon the fulness of the heart at last
Says no grace after meat. My wine has run
Indeed out of my cup, and there is none
To gather up the bread of my repast
Scattered and trampled; yet I find some good
In earth's green herbs, and streams that bubble up
Clear from the darkling ground,— content until
I sit with angels before better food.
Dear Christ! when thy new vintage fills my cup,
This hand shall shake no more, nor that wine spill.

IRREPARABLENESS.

I HAVE been in the meadows all the day,
And gathered there the nosegay that you see,
Singing within myself as bird or bee,
When such do field-work on a morn of May.
But, now I look upon my flowers, decay
Has met them in my hands more tally
Because more warmly clasped; and sobs are free
To come instead of songs. What do you say,
Sweet counsellors, dear friends? that I should go
Back straightway to the fields and gather more?
Another, sooth, may do it; but not I!
My heart is very tired, my strength is low,
My hands are full of blossoms plucked before,
Held dead within them till myself shall die.

TEARS.

THANK God, bless God, all ye who suffer not
More grief than ye can weep for.
That is well;

That is light grieving! lighter, none befall
Since Adam forfeited the primal lot.
Tears!—what are tears? The babe weeps in its cot,
The mother singing; at her marriage-bell
The bride weeps; and before the oracle
Of high-famed hills the poet has forgot
Such moisture on his cheeks. Thank God for grace,
Ye who weep only! If, as some have done,
Ye grope tear-blinded in a desert place,
And touch but tombs, look up! those tears will run
Soon in long rivers down the lifted face,
And leave the vision clear for stars and sun.

GRIEF.

I TELL you hopeless grief is passionless;
That only men incredulous of despair,
Half-taught in anguish, through the midnight air
Beat upward to God's throne in loud access
Of shrieking and reproach. Full desirousness,
In souls as countries, lieth silent-bare
Under the blanching, vertical eye-glare
Of the absolute heavens. Deep-hearted man, express
Grief for thy dead in silence like to death—
Most like a monumental statue set
In everlasting watch and moveless woe
Till itself crumble to the dust beneath.
Touch it; the marble eyelids are not wet;
If it could weep, it could arise and go.

SUBSTITUTION.

WHEN some beloved voice that was to you
Both sound and sweetness faileth suddenly,

And silence against which you dare
not cry
Aches round you like a strong dis-
ease and new,
What hope? what help? what music
will undo
That silence to your sense? Not
friendship's sigh;
Not reason's subtle count; not melody
Of viols, nor of pipes that Faunus
blew;
Not songs of poets, nor of nightin-
gales
Whose hearts leap upward through
the cypress-trees
To the clear moon; nor yet the spheric
laws
Self-chanted, nor the angels' sweet
All-hails,
Met in the smile of God: nay, none
of these.
Speak thou, availing Christ! and fill
this pause.

COMFORT.

SPEAK low to me, my Saviour, low
and sweet
From out the hallelujahs sweet and
low,
Lest I should fear and fall, and miss
thee so,
Who art not missed by any that en-
treat.
Speak to me as to Mary at thy
feet!
And if no precious gums my hands
bestow,
Let my tears drop like amber while I
go
In reach of thy divinest voice com-
plete
In humanest affection,—thus, in
sooth,
To lose the sense of losing; as a
child,
Whose song-bird seeks the wood for-
evermore,
Is sung to in its stead by mother's
mouth
Till, sinking on her breast, love-recon-
ciled,
He sleeps the faster that he wept be-
fore.

PERPLEXED MUSIC.

AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED TO
E. J.

EXPERIENCE, like a pale musician,
holds
A dulcimer of patience in his hand,
Whence harmonies we cannot under-
stand,
Of God's will in his worlds, the strain
unfolds
In sad, perplexed minors: deathly
colds
Fall on us while we hear, and coun-
termand
Our sanguine heart back from the
fancy-land,
With nightingales in visionary wolds.
We murmur, "Where is any certain
tune
Or measured music in such notes as
these?
But angels, leaning from the golden
seat,
Are not so minded: their fine ear hath
won
The issue of completed cadences,
And, smiling down the stars, they
whisper—SWEET.

WORK.

WHAT are we set on earth for? Say,
to toil;
Nor seek to leave thy tending of the
vines
For all the heat o' the day, till it
declines,
And death's mild curfew shall from
work assoil.
God did anoint thee with his odor-
ous oil,
To wrestle, not to reign; and he as-
signs
All thy tears over, like pure crystal-
lines,
For younger fellow-workers of the
soil
To wear for amulets. So others
shall
Take patience, labor, to their heart
and hand,
From thy hand and thy heart and thy
brave cheer,
And God's grace fructify through
thee to all.

The least flower, with a brimming
cup may stand
And share its dewdrop with another
near.

FUTURITY.

AND O beloved voices, upon which
Ours passionately call, because ere-
long
Ye brake off in the middle of that
song
We sang together softly, to enrich
The poor world with the sense of love,
and witch
The heart out of things evil,—I am
strong,
Knowing ye are not lost for aye
among
The hills with last year's thrush.
God keeps a niche
In heaven to hold our idols; and al-
beit
He brake them to our faces, and de-
nied
That our close kisses should impair
their white,
I know we shall behold them raised,
complete,
The dust swept from their beauty,—
glorified
New Memmons singing in the great
God-light.

THE TWO SAYINGS.

Two sayings of the Holy Scriptures
beat
Like pulses in the church's brow and
breast;
And by them we find rest in our un-
rest,
And, heart-deep in salt tears, do yet
entreat,
God's fellowship as if on heavenly
seat.
The first is, JESUS WEPT, whereon is
prest
Full many a sobbing face that drops
its best
And sweetest waters on the record
sweet:
And one is where the Christ, denied
and scorned,
LOOKED UPON PETER. Oh, to render
plain,

By help of having loved a little, and
mourned,
That look of sovran love and sovran
pain
Which HE, who could not sin yet suf-
fered, turned
On him who could reject, but not sus-
tain!

THE LOOK.

THE Saviour looked on Peter. Ay,
no word,
No gesture of reproach: the heavens
serene,
Though heavy with armed justice, did
not lean
Their thunders that way: the forsaken
Lord
Looked only on the traitor. None re-
cord
What that look was, none guess; for
those who have seen
Wrongs lovers loving through a
death-pang keen,
Or pale-cheeked martyrs smiling to a
sword,
Have missed Jehovah at the judg-
ment-call,
And Peter, from the height of blas-
phemy,—
“I never knew this man”—did quail
and fall
As knowing straight THAT GOD, and
turned free
And went out speechless from the
face of all,
And filled the silence, weeping bitter-
ly.

THE MEANING OF THE
LOOK.

I THINK that look of Christ might
seem to say,
“Thou Peter! art thou, then, a com-
mon stone
Which I at last must break my heart
upon,
For all God's charge to his high an-
gels may
Guard my foot better? Did I yester-
day
Wash thy feet, my beloved, that they
should run
Quick to deny me 'neath the morning
sun?

And do thy kisses, like the rest, betray?
 The cock crows coldly.—Go, and manifest
 A late contrition, but no bootless fear;
 For, when thy final need is darest,
 Thou shalt not be denied, as I am here:
 My voice to God and angels shall attest,
Because I know this man, let him be clear."

A THOUGHT FOR A LONE- LY DEATH-BED.

INSCRIBED TO MY FRIEND E. C.

If God compel thee to this destiny,
 To die alone, with none beside thy bed
 To ruffle round with sobs thy last word said,
 And mark with tears the pulses ebb from thee,
 Pray then alone, "O Christ, come tenderly!"
 By thy forsaken Sonship in the red Drear wine-press, by the wilderness outspread,
 And the lone garden where thine agony
 Fell bloody from thy brow,—by all of those
 Permitted desolations, comfort mine!
 No earthly friend being near me, interpose
 No deathly angel 'twixt my face and thine,
 But stoop thyself to gather my life's rose,
 And smile away my mortal to divine!"

WORK AND CONTEMPLA- TION.

THE woman singeth at her spinning-wheel
 A pleasant chant, ballad, or barcarole;
 She thinketh of her song, upon the whole,
 Far more than of her flax; and yet the reel
 Is full, and artfully her fingers feel

With quick adjustment, provident control,
 The lines, too subtly twisted to unroll,
 Out to a perfect thread. I hence appeal
 To the dear Christian Church, that we may do
 Our Father's business in these temples mirk,
 Thus swift and steadfast, thus intent and strong;
 While thus, apart from toil, our souls pursue
 Some high, calm, spheric tune, and prove our work
 The better for the sweetness of our song.

PAIN IN PLEASURE.

A THOUGHT lay like a flower upon mine heart,
 And drew around it other thoughts like bees,
 For multitude and thirst of sweet-nesses:
 Whereat rejoicing, I desired the art
 Of the Greek whistler, who to wharf and mart
 Could lure those insect swarms from orange-trees,
 That I might hive with me such thoughts, and please
 My soul so always. Foolish counter-part
 Of a weak man's vain wishes! While I spoke,
 The thought I called a flower grew nettle-rough,
 The thoughts called bees stung me to festering:
 Oh, entertain (cried Reason as she woke,) Your best and gladdest thoughts but long enough,
 And they will all prove sad enough to sting!

FLUSII OR FAUNUS.

You see this dog: it was but yesterday I mused, forgetful of his presence here, Till thought on thought drew downward tear on tear:

When from the pillow where wet-cheeked I lay,
A head as hairy as Faunus thrust its way
Right sudden against my face, two golden-clear
Great eyes astonished mine, a drooping ear
Did flap me on either cheek to dry the spray!
I started first as some Arcadian Amazed by goatly god in twilight grove;
But, as the bearded vision closerlier ran
My tears off, I knew Flush, and rose above
Surprise and sadness, thanking the true *PAX*
Who by low creatures leads to heights of love.

FINITE AND INFINITE.

THE wind sounds only in opposing straits,
The sea beside the shore; man's spirit rends
Its quiet only up against the ends
Of wants and oppositions, loves and hates,
Where, worked and worn by passionate debates,
And losing by the loss it apprehends,
The flesh rocks round, and every breath it sends
Is ravelled to a sigh. All tortured states
Suppose a straitened place. Jehovah, Lord,
Make room for rest, around me! out of sight
Now float me, of the vexing land abhorred,
Till, in deep calms of space, my soul may right
Her nature, shoot large sail on lengthening cord,
And rush exultant on the Infinite.

AN APPREHENSION.

IF all the gentlest-hearted friends I know
Concentred in one heart their gentleness,

That still grew gentler till its pulse was less
For life than pity, I should yet be slow
To bring my own heart nakedly below
The palm of such a friend, that he should press
Motive, condition, means, appliances,
My false ideal joy and fickle woe,
Out full to light and knowledge: I should fear
Some plait between the brows, some rougher chime
In the free voice. O angels, let your flood
Of bitter scorn dash on me! do ye hear
What I say who bear calmly all the time
This everlasting face to face with God?

DISCONTENT.

LIGHT human nature is too lightly lost
And ruffled without cause, complaining on,
Restless with rest, until, being overthrown,
It learneth to lie quiet. Let a frost
Or a small wasp have crept to the innermost
Of our ripe peach, or let the wilful sun
Shine westward of our window, straight we run
A furlong's sigh, as if the world were lost.
But what time through the heart and through the brain
God hath transfix'd us, we, so moved before,
Attain to a calm. Ay, shouldering weights of pain,
We anchor in deep waters, safe from shore,
And hear, submissive o'er the stormy main
God's chartered judgments walk forevermore.

PATIENCE TAUGHT BY
NATURE.

'O dreary life!' we cry, "O dreary,
life!"
And still the generations of the birds
Sing through our sighing, and the
flocks and herds
Serenely live while we are keeping
strife
With Heaven's true purpose in us, as
a knife
Against which we may struggle!
Ocean girds
Unslackened the dry land, savannah-swards
Unweary sweep, hills watch unworn,
and rife
Meek leaves drop yearly from the
forest-trees
To show above the unwasted stars
that pass
In their old glory. O thou God of old,
Grant me some smaller grace than
comes to these!
But so much patience as a blade of
grass
Grows by, contented through the
heat and cold.

CHEERFULNESS TAUGHT
BY REASON.

I THINK we are too ready with complaint
In this fair world of God's. Had we
no hope,
Indeed, beyond the zenith, and the
slope
Of yon gray blank of sky, we might
grow faint
To muse upon eternity's constraint
Round our aspirant souls; but, since
the scope
Must widen early, is it well to droop,
For a few days consumed in loss and
taint?
O pusillanimous heart, be comforted,
And like a cheerful traveller take the
road,
Singing beside the hedge. What if
the bread
Be bitter in thine inn, and thou un-
shod

To meet the flints? At least it may
be said,
"Because the way is short, I thank
thee, God."

EXAGGERATION.

We overstate the ills of life, and take
Imagination (given us to bring down
The choirs of singing angels over-
shone
By God's clear glory) down our earth
to rake
The dismal snows instead, flake fol-
lowing flake,
To cover all the corn; we walk upon
The shadow of hills across a level
thrown,
And pant like climbers: near the al-
derbake
We sigh so loud, the nightingale with-
in
Refuses to sing loud, as else she would.
O brothers! let us leave the shame
and sin
Of taking vainly, in a plaintive mood,
The holy name of GRIEVE! — holy
herein,
That by the grief of ONE came all our
good.

ADEQUACY.

Now, by the verdure on thy thousand
hills,
Beloved England, doth the earth ap-
pear
Quite good enough for men to over-
bear
The will of God in, with rebellious
wills!
We cannot say the morning-sun ful-
fills
Ingloriously its course, nor that the
clear,
Strong stars without significance in-
sphere
Our habitation: we, meantime, our
ills
Heap up against this good, and lift a
cry
Against this work-day world, this ill-
spread feast,
As if ourselves were better certainly
Than what we come to. Maker and
High Priest,

I ask thee not my joys to multiply,
Only to make me worthier of the least.

TO GEORGE SAND.

A DESIRE.

THOU large-brained woman and large-hearted man,
Self-called George Sand, whose soul, amid the lions
Of thy tumultuous senses, moans defiance,
And answers roar for roar, as spirits can,
I would some mild miraculous thunder ran
Above the applauded circus, in applause
Of thine own nobler nature's strength and science,
Drawing two pinions, white as wings of swan,
From thy strong shoulders, to amaze the place
With holier light! that thou, to woman's claim
And man's, mightst join beside the angel's grace
Of a pure genius sanctified from blame,
Till child and maiden pressed to thine embrace
To kiss upon thy lips a stainless fame.

TO GEORGE SAND.

A RECOGNITION.

TRUE genius, but true woman, dost deny
The woman's nature with a manly scorn,
And break away the gauds and armlets worn
By weaker women in captivity?
Ah, vain denial! that revolted cry
Is sobbed in by a woman's voice forlorn.
Thy woman's hair, my sister, all unshorn,
Floats back dishevelled strength in agony,
Disproving thy man's name; and while before

The world thou burnest in a poet-fire,
We see thy woman-heart beat evermore
Through the large flame. Beat purer,
heart, and higher,
Till God unsex thee on the heavenly shore
Where unincarnate spirits purely aspire!

THE PRISONER.

I COUNT the dismal time by months and years
Since last I felt the greensward under foot,
And the great breath of all things summer-mute
Met mine upon my lips. Now earth appears
As strange to me as dreams of distant spheres,
Or thoughts of heaven we weep at.
Nature's lute Sounds on, behind this door so closely shut,
A strange, wild music to the prisoner's ears
Dilated by the distance, till the brain Grows dim with fancies which it feels too fine,
While ever, with a visionary pain, Past the precluded senses, sweep and shine
Streams, forests, glades, and many a golden train
Of sunlit hills transfigured to divine.

INSUFFICIENCY.

WHEN I attain to utter forth in verse Some inward thought, my soul throbs audibly
Along my pulses, yearning to be free, And something farther, fuller, higher, rehearse,
To the individual, true, and the universe,
In consummation of right harmony;
But like a wind-exposed, distorted tree,
We are blown against forever by the curse

Which breathes through nature. Oh,
the world is weak,
The effluence of each is false to all,
And what we best conceive we fail to
speak.
Wait, soul, until thine ashen gar-
ments fall,
And then resume thy broken strains,
and seek
Fit peroration without let or thrall.

TWO SKETCHES.

II. B.

I.

THE shadow of her face upon the wall
May take your memory to the perfect
Greek;
But when you front her, you would
call the cheek
Too full, sir, for your models, if, with-
al,
That bloom it wears could leave you
critical,
And that smile reaching toward the
rosy streak;
For one who smiles so has no need to
speak
To lead your thoughts along, as steed
to stall.
A smile that turns the sunny side o'
the heart
On all the world, as if herself did win
By what she lavished on an open
mant!
Let no man call the liberal sweetness
sin;
For friends may whisper as they stand
apart,
"Methinks there's still some warmer
place within."

A. B.

II.

HER azure eyes dark lashes hold in
fee;
Her fair superfluous ringlets without
check
Drop after one another down her
neck,
As many to each cheek as you might
see

Green leaves to a wild rose: this sign
outwardly,
And a like woman-covering seems to
deck
Her inner nature, for she will not
fleck
World's sunshine with a finger. Sympa-
thy
Must call her in love's name! and
then, I know,
She rises up, and brightens as she
should,
And lights her smile for comfort, and
is slow
In nothing of high-hearted fortitude.
To smell this flower, come near it:
such can grow
In that sole garden where Christ's
brow dropped blood.

MOUNTAINEER AND POET.

The simple goatherd between Alp
and sky,
Seeing his shadow in that awful tryst
Dilated to a giant's on the mist,
Esteems not his own stature larger by
The apparent image, but more pa-
tiently
Strikes his staff down beneath his
clenching fist,
While the snow-mountains lift their
amethyst
And sapphire crowns of splendor, far
and nigh.
Into the air around him. Learn from
hence
Meek morals, all ye poets that pursue
Your way still onward up to emi-
nence:
Ye are not great because creatio-
drew
Large revelations round your earliest
sense,
Nor bright because God's glory shines
for you.

THE POET. .

The poet hath the child's sight in his
breast,
And sees all new. What oftenest he
has viewed,
He views with the first glory. Fair
and good
Pall never on him at the fairest, best,

But stand before him holy, and undressed
 In week-day false conventions, such as would
 Drag other men down from the altitude
 Of primal types, too early dispossessed.
 Why, God would tire of all his heavens as soon
 As thou, O godlike, childlike poet, didst
 Of daily and nightly sights of sun and moon;
 And therefore hath he set thee in the midst,
 Where men may hear thy wonder's ceaseless tune,
 And praise his world forever as thou bidst.

HIRAM POWERS' GREEK SLAVE.

THEY say ideal beauty cannot enter
 The house of anguish. On the threshold stands
 An alien Image with enshackled hands,
 Called the Greek Slave! as if the artist meant her
 (That passionless perfection which he lent her,
 Shadowed, not darkened, where the sill expands)
 To so confront man's crimes in different lands
 With man's ideal sense. Pierce to the centre,
 Art's fiery finger! and break up ere long
 The serfdom of this world! appeal, fair stone,
 From God's pure heights of beauty against man's wrong!
 Catch up in thy divine face, not alone
 Bast griefs, but west, and strike and shame the strong,
 By thunders of white silence overthrown.

LIFE.

EACH creature holds an insular point in space;
 Yet what man stirs a finger, breathes a sound,
 But all the multitudinous beings round
 In all the countless worlds, with time and place,
 For their conditions, down to the central base,
 Thrill, haply, in vibration and rebound,
 Life answering life across the vast profound,
 In full antiphony, by a common grace?
 I think this sudden joyance which illumes
 A child's mouth sleeping, unaware may run
 From some soul newly loosened from earth's tombs:
 I think this passionate sigh, which, half-begin,
 I stifle back, may reach and stir the plumes
 Of God's calm angel standing in the sun.

LOVE.

WE cannot live, except thus mutually
 We alternate, aware or unaware,
 The reflex act of life; and when we bear
 Our virtue outward most impulsively,
 Most full of invocation, and to be
 Most instantly compellant, certes there
 We live most life, whoever breathes most air,
 And counts his dying years by sun and sea:
 But when a soul by choice and conscience doth
 Throw out her full force on another soul,
 The conscience and the concentration both
 Make mere life, love. For Life in perfect whole
 And aim consummated is Love in sooth,
 As nature's magnet-heat rounds pole with pole.

HEAVEN AND EARTH.

"And there was silence in heaven for the space of half an hour." — *Revelation*.

God, who with thunders and great voices kept
Beneath thy throne, and stars most silver-paced
Along the inferior gyres, and open-faced
Melodious angels round, canst intercept
Music with music, yet at will hast swept
All back, all back (said he in Patmos placed),
To fill the heavens with silence of the waste
Which lasted half an hour! — lo, I who have wept
All day and night beseech thee by my tears,
And by that dread response of curse and groan
Men alternate across these hemispheres,
Vouchsafe us such a half-hour's hush alone,
In compensation for our stormy years:
As heaven has paused from song, let earth from moan.

THE PROSPECT.

METHINKS we do as fretful children do,
Leaning their faces on the window-pane
To sigh the glass dim with their own breath's stain,
And shut the sky and landscape from their view;
And thus, alas! since God the maker drew
A mystic separation 'twixt those twain, —
The life beyond us and our souls in pain, —
We miss the prospect which we are called unto
By grief we are fools to use. Be still and strong,
O man, my brother! hold thy sobbing breath,

And keep thy soul's large window pure from wrong,
That so, as life's appointment issueth,
Thy vision may be clear to watch along
The sunset consummation-lights of death.

HUGH STUART BOYD.¹

HIS BLINDNESS.

God would not let the spheric lights accost
This God-loved man, and bade the earth stand off
With all her beckoning hills whose golden stuff
Under the feet of the royal sun is crost.
Yet such things were to him not wholly lost, —
Permitted, with his wandering eyes light-proof,
To catch fair visions rendered full enough
By many a ministrant accomplished ghost, —
Still seeing, to sounds of softly-turned book-leaves,
Sappho's crown-rose, and Meleager's spring,
And Gregory's starlight on Greek-burnished eyes,
Till sensuous and unsensuous seemed one thing,
Viewed from one level, — earth's reapers at the sheaves
Scarce plainer than heaven's angels on the wing.

¹ To whom was inscribed, in grateful affection, my poem of "Cyprian Wine." There comes a moment in life when even gratitude and affection turn to pain, as they do now with me. This excellent and learned man, enthusiastic for the good and the beautiful, and one of the most simple and upright of human beings, passed out of his long darkness through death, in the summer of 1848; Dr. Adam Clarke's daughter and biographer, Mrs. Smith (happier in this than the absent) fulfilling a doubly filial duty as she sat by the death-bed of her father's friend and hers.

HUGH STUART BOYD.

HIS DEATH, 1848.

BELOVED friend, who, living many years
With sightless eyes raised vainly to the sun,
Didst learn to keep thy patient soul in tune
To visible Nature's elemental cheers,
God has not caught thee to new hemispheres
Because thou wast aweary of this one;
I think thine angel's patience first was done,
And that he spake out with celestial tears,
"Is it enough, dear God? then light-en so
This soul that smiles in darkness!" Steadfast friend,
Who never didst my heart or life misknow,
Nor either's faults too keenly apprehend,
How can I wonder when I see thee go
To join the dead found faithful to the end?

HUGH STUART BOYD.

LEGACIES.

THREE gifts the dying left me,—Æschylus,
And Gregory Nazianzen, and a clock
Chiming the gradual hours out like a flock
Of stars whose motion is melodious.
The books were those I used to read from, thus
Assisting my dear teacher's soul to unlock
The darkness of his eyes: now, mine they mock,
Blinded in turn by tears; now murmurous
Sad echoes of my young voice, years ago
Entuning from these leaves the Grecian phrase,
Return and choke my utterance.
Books, lie down
In silence on the shelf there, within gaze;
And thou, clock, striking the hour's pulses on,
Chime in the day which ends these parting-days!

THE LOST BOWER.

I.

In the pleasant orchard-closes,
"God bless all our gains!" say we;
But "May God bless all our losses!"
Better suits with our degree.
Listen, gentle, ay, and simple! listen,
children on the knee!

II.

Green the land is where my daily
Steps in jocund childhood played,
Dimpled close with hill and valley,
Dappled very close with shade;
Summer-snow of apple-blossoms running up from glade to glade.

III.

There is one hill I see nearer
In my vision of the rest;
And a little wood seems clearer
As it climbeth from the west,
Sideway from the tree-locked valley,
to the airy upland crest.

IV

Small the wood is, green with hazels,
And, completing the ascent,
Where the wind blows, and sun daz-zles,
Thrills in leafy tremblement,
Like a heart, that, after climbing, beateth quickly through content.

V.

Not a step the wood advances
O'er the open hilltop's bound:
There, in green arrest, the branches
See their image on the ground:
You may walk beneath them smiling,
glad with sight, and glad with
sound.

VI.

For you harken on your right hand
How the birds do leap and call
In the greenwood, out of sight, and
Out of reach and fear of all;
And the squirrels crack the filberts
through their cheerful madrigal.

VII.

On your left, the sheep are cropping
The slant grass and daisies pale,
And five apple-trees stand dropping
Separate shadows toward the vale
Over which, in choral silencee,
the hills look you their "All hail!"

VIII.

Far out, kindled by each other,
Slining hills on hills arise,
Close as brother leans to brother
When they press beneath the eyes
Of some father praying blessings from
the gifts of paradise.

IX.

White beyond, above them mount-
ed,
And above their woods also,
Malvern hills, for mountains count-
ed
Not unduly, loom a-row —
Keepers of Piers Plowman's visions
through the sunshine and the
snow.¹

X.

Yet in childhood little prized I
That fair walk and far survey:
'Twas a straight walk unadvised by
The least mischief worth a nay;
Up and down — as dull as grammar
on the eve of holiday.

¹ The Malvern Hills of Worcestershire are the scene of Langland's visions, and thus present the earliest classic ground of English poetry.

XI.

But the wood, all close and clenching
Bough in bough and root in root,—
No more sky (for over-branching)
At your head than at your foot,—
Oh, the wood drew me within it by a
glamour past dispute!

XII.

Few and broken paths showed
through it,
Where the sheep had tried to
run,
Forced with snowy wool to strew it
round the thickets, when anon
They, with silly thorn-pricked noses,
bleated back into the sun.

XIII.

But my childish heart beat stronger
Than those thickets dared to grow:
I could pierce them! I could longer
Travel on, methought, than so:
Sheep for sheep-paths! braver chil-
dren climb and creep where
they would go.

XIV.

And the poets wander, said I,
Over places all as rude:
Bold Rinaldo's lovely lady
Sate to meet him in a wood;
Rosalinda, like a fountain, laughed out
pure with solitude.

XV.

And, if Chaucer had not travelled
Through a forest by a well,
He had never dreant nor marvelled
At those ladies fair and fell
Who lived smiling without loving in
their island-citadel.

XVI.

Thus I thought of the old singers,
And took courage from their song,
Till my little struggling fingers
Tore asunder gyve and thong
Of the brambles which entrapped me,
and the barrier branches strong

XVII.

On a day, such pastime keeping,
With a fawn's heart debonair,
Under-crawling, overleaping
Thorns that prick, and boughs that
bear,
I stood suddenly astonished : I was
gladdened unaware.

XVIII.

From the place I stood in, floated
Back the covert dim and close,
And the open ground was coated
Carpet-smooth with grass and moss,
And the bluebell's purple presence
signed it worthily across.

XIX.

Here a linden-tree stood, bright-
ening
All adown its silver rind;
For as some trees draw the light-
ening,
So this tree, unto my mind,
Drew to earth the blessed sunshine
from the sky wherèd it was
shrinéd.

XX.

Tall the linden-tree, and near it
An old hawthorn also grew;
And wood-ivy like a spirit
Hovered dimly round the two,
Shaping thence that bower of beauty
which I sing of thus to you.

XXI.

'Twas a bower for garden fitter
Than for any woodland wide:
Though a fresh and dewy glitter
Struck it through from side to side,
Shaped and shaven was the freshness,
as by garden-cunning plied.

XXII.

Oh ! a lady might have come there,
Hooded fairly like her hawk,
With a book or lute in summer,
And a hope of sweeter talk,—
Listening less to her own music than
for footsteps on the walk.

XXIII.

But that bower appeared a marvel
In the wildness of the place;
With such seeming art and travail,

Finely fixed and fitted was
Leaf to leaf, the dark-green ivy, to
the summit from the base.

XXIV.

And the ivy, veined and glossy,
Was inwrought with eglantine;
And the wild hop fibred closely;
And the large-leaved columbine,
Arch of door and window-mullion,
did right sylvanly intwine.

XXV.

Rose-trees either side the door were
Growing lithe and growing tall,
Each one set a summer warden
For the keeping of the hall,—
With a red rose and a white rose,
leaning, nodding at the wall.

XXVI.

As I entered, mosses hushing
Stole all noises from my foot;
And a green elastic cushion,
Clasped within the linden's root,
Took me in a chair of silence very
rare and absolute.

XXVII.

All the floor was paved with glory,
Greenly, silently inlaid
(Through quick motions made be-
fore me)
With fair counterparts in shade
Of the fair serrated ivy-leaves which
slanted overhead.

XXVIII.

"Is such pavement in a palace?"
So I questioned in my thought:
The sun, shining through the chal-
ice

Of the red rose hung without,
Threw within a red libation, like an
answer to my doubt.

XXIX.

At the same time, on the linen
Of my childish lap there fell
Two white may-leaves, downward
winning
Through the ceiling's miracle,
From a blossom, like an angel, out of
sight, yet blessing well.

XXX.

Down to floor, and up to ceiling,
Quick I turned my childish face,
With an innocent appealing
For the secret of the place
To the trees, which surely knew it in
partaking of the grace.

XXXI.

Where's no foot of human creature
How could reach a human hand ?
And, if this be work of Nature,
Why has Nature turned so bland,
Breaking off from other wild-work ?
It was hard to understand.

XXXII.

Was she weary of rough-doing,
Of the bramble and the thorn ?
Did she pause in tender rueing
Here of all her sylvan scorn ?
Or in mock of art's deceiving was the
sudden mildness worn ?

XXXIII.

Or could this same bower (I fancied)
Be the work of dryad strong,
Who, surviving all that chanced
In the world's old Pagan wrong,
Lay hid, feeding in the woodland on
the last true poet's song ?

XXXIV.

Or was this the house of fairies,
Left, because of the rough ways,
Unassailed by Ave Mary's
Which the passing pilgrim prays,
And beyond St. Catherine's chiming
on the blessed sabbath days ?

XXXV.

So, young muse, I sate listening
To my fancy's wildest word:
On a sudden, through the glistening
Leaves around, a little stirred,
Came a sound, a sense of music, which
was rather felt than heard.

XXXVI.

Softly, finely, it inwound me;
From the world it shut me in,
Like a fountain falling round me,
Which with silver waters thin
Clips a little water-Naiad sitting smil-
ingly within.

XXXVII.

Whence the music came, who know-
eth ?
I know nothing; but indeed
Pan or Faunus never bloweth
So much sweetness from a reed
Which has sucked the milk of waters
at the oldest riverhead.

XXXVIII.

Never lark the sun can waken
With such sweetness, when the
lark,
The high planets overtaking
In the half-evanished dark,
Casts his singing to their singing, like
an arrow to the mark.

XXXIX.

Never nightingale so singeth:
Oh, she leans on thorny tree,
And her poet-song she flingeth
Over pain to victory !
Yet she never sings such music—or
she sings it not to me.

XL.

Never blackbirds, never thrushes,
Nor small finches, sing as sweet,
When the sun strikes through the
bushes
To their crimson clinging feet,
And their pretty eyes look sideways
to the summer heavens com-
plete.

XLI.

If it were a bird, it seemed
Most like Chaucer's, which, in
sooth,
He of green and azure dreamèd,
While it sate in spirit-ruth
On that bier of a crowned lady, sing-
ing nigh her silent mouth.

XLII.

If it were a bird?—ah, sceptic,
Give me “yea” or give me
“nay,”
Though my soul were nympholep-
tic
As I heard that virèlay,
You may stoop your pride to pardon,
for my sin is far away !

XLIII.

I rose up in exaltation
And an inward trembling heat,
And (it seemed) in geste of passion
Dropped the music to my feet
Like a garment rustling downwards —
such a silence followed it !

XLIV.

Heart and head beat through the
quiet
Full and heavily, though slower:
In the song, I think, and by it,
Mystic Presences of power
Had upsnaughted me to the Timeless,
then returned me to the Hour.

XLV.

In a child-abstraction lifted,
Straightway from the bower I past,
Foot and soul being dimly drifted
Through the greenwood, till at last
In the hilltop's open sunshine I all
consciously was cast.

XLVI.

Face to face with the true moun-
tains.
I stood silently and still,
Drawing strength from fancy's
dannings,
From the air about the hill,
And from Nature's open mercies, and
most debonair good-will.

XLVII.

Oh the golden-hearted daisies
Witnessed there, before my youth,
To the truth of things, with praises
Of the beauty of the truth ;
And I woke to Nature's real, laugh-
ing joyfully for both.

XLVIII.

And I said within me, laughing,
I have found a bower to-day,
A green lusus, fashioned half in
Chance, and half in Nature's play,
And a little bird sings nigh it, I will
nevermore missay.

XLIX.

Henceforth I will be the fairy
Of this bower not built by one;
I will go there, sad or merry,

With each morning's benison,
And the bird shall be my harper in
the dream-hall I have won.

L.

So I said. But the next morning, —
(Child, look up into my face, —
'Ware, O sceptic, of your scorning !
This is truth in its pure grace !)
The next morning, all had vanished,
or my wandering missed the
place.

LI.

Bring an oath most sylvan-holy,
And upon it swear me true,
By the wind-bells swinging slowly
Their mute curfews in the dew,
By the advent of the snowdrop, by
the rosemary and rue, —

LII.

I affirm by all or any,
Let the cause be charm or chance,
That my wandering searches many
Missed the bower of my romance,
That I nevermore upon it turned my
mortal countenance.

LIII.

I affirm, that, since I lost it,
Never bower has seemed so fair,
Never garden-creeper crossed it
With so deft and brave an air,
Never bird sung in the summer as I
saw and heard them there.

LIV.

Day by day, with new desire,
Toward my wood I ran in faith,
Under leaf and over brier,
Through the thickets, out of breath,
Like the prince who rescued Beauty
from the sleep as long as death.

LV.

But his sword of mettle clashed,
And his arm smote strong, I ween,
And her dreaming spirit flashed
Through her body's fair white
screen,
And the light thereof might guide
him up the cedar alleys green.

LVI.

But for me I saw no splendor,—
All my sword was my child-heart;
And the wood refused surrender
Of that bower it held apart,
Safe as Oedipus' grave-place 'mid
Colone's olives swart.

LVII.

As Aladdin sought the basements
His fair palace rose upon,
And the four and twenty casements
Which gave answers to the sun,
So, in wilderment of gazing, I looked
up, and I looked down.

LVIII.

Years have vanished since, as
wholly
As the little bower did them;
And you call it tender folly
That such thoughts should come
again?
Ah, I cannot change this sighing for
your smiling, brother-men!

LIX.

For this loss it did prefigure
Other loss of better good,
When my soul, in spirit-vigor
And in ripened womanhood,
Fell from visions of more beauty than
an arbor in a wood.

LX.

I have lost, oh, many a pleasure,
Many a hope, and many a power,
Studious health and merry leisure,
The first dew on the first flower;
But the first of all my losses was the
losing of the bower.

LXI.

I have lost the dream of Doing,
And the other dream of Done;
The first spring in the Pursuing,
The first pride in the Begun,
First recoil from incompleteness in the
face of what is won;

LXII.

Exaltations in the far light
Where some cottage only is;
Mild dejections in the starlight,
Which the sadder-hearted miss;
And the child-cheek blushing scarlet
for the very shame of bliss.

LXIII.

I have lost the sound child-sleeping
Which the thunder could not break;
Something, too, of the strong leaping
Of the staglike heart awake,
Which the pale is low for keeping
in the road it ought to take.

LXIV.

Some respect to social fictions
Has been also lost by me,
And some generous genuflexions,
Which my spirit offered free
To the pleasant old conventions of
our false humanity.

LXV.

All my losses did I tell you,
Ye perchance would look away,
Ye would answer me, " Farewell,
you
Make sad company to-day,
And your tears are falling faster than
the bitter words you say."

LXVI.

For God placed me like a dial
In the open ground with power,
And my heart had for its trial
All the sun and all the shower;
And I suffered many losses, — and
my first was of the bower.

LXVII.

Laugh you? If that loss of mine be
Of no heavy-seeming weight, —
When the cone falls from the pine-tree,
The young children laugh thereat;
Yet the wind that struck it riseth,
and the tempest shall be great.

LXVIII.

One who knew me in my childhood,
In the glamour and the game,
Looking on me long and mild, would
Never know me for the same.
Come, unchanging recollections,
where those changes overcame!

LXIX.

By this couch I weakly lie on
While I count my memories,
Through the fingers, which, still
sighing,
I press closely on mine eyes,
Clear as once beneath the sunshine,
I behold the bower arise.

LXX.

Springs the linden-tree as greenly,
Stroked with light adown its rind,
And the ivy-leaves serenely
Each in either interwined;
And the rose-trees at the doorway—
they have neither grown nor
pined.

LXXI.

From those overblown faint roses
Not a leaf appeareth shed;
And that little bud discloses
Not a thorn's breadth more of red
For the winters and the summers
which have passed me overhead.

LXXII.

And that music overfloweth,
Sudden sweet, the sylvan caves;
Thrush, or nightingale, — who
knoweth?
Fay, or Faunus, — who believes?
But my heart still trembles in me to
the trembling of the leaves.

LXXIII.

Is the bower lost then? who sayeth
That the bower indeed is lost?
Hark! my spirit in it prayeth
Through the sunshine and the frost;
And the prayer preserves it greenly
to the last and uttermost,

LXXIV.

Till another open for me
In God's Eden-land unknown,
With an angel at the doorway,
White with gazing at his throne;
And a saint's voice in the palm-trees,
singing, "All is lost . . . and
won!"

A SONG AGAINST SINGING.

TO E. J. H.

I.

THEY bid me sing to thee,
Thou golden-haired and silver-voiced
child,
With lips by no worse sigh than sleep's
defiled,

With eyes unknowing how tears dim
the sight,
And feet all trembling at the new de-
light
Treaders of earth to be.

II.

Ah, no! the lark may bring
A song to thee from out the morning
cloud,
The merry river from its lilies bowed,
The brisk rain from the trees, the
lucky wind
That half doth make its music, half
doth find;
But I—I may not sing.

III

How could I think it right,
New-comer on our earth as, Sweet,
thou art,
To bring a verse from out an human
heart
Made heavy with accumulated tears,
And cross with such amount of weary
years
Thy day-sum of delight?

IV.

Even if the verse were said,
Thou, who wouldst clasp thy tiny
hands to hear
The wind or rain, gay bird or river
clear,
Wouldst, at that sound of sad humani-
ties,
Upturn thy bright, uncomprehending
eyes,
And bid me play instead.

V.

Therefore no song of mine,
But prayer in place of singing, —
prayer that would
Commend thee to the new-creating
God,
Whose gift is childhood's heart with-
out its stain
Of weakness, ignorance, and chan-
ging vain:
That gift of God be thine!

VI.

So wilt thou aye be young,
In lovelier childhood than thy shining
brow
And pretty winning accents make
thee now;

Yea, sweeter than this scarce articulate sound
(How sweet !) of "father," "mother,"
shall be found
The ABBA on thy tongue.

VII.

And so, as years shall chase
Each other's shadows, thou wilt less
resemble
Thy fellows of the earth who toil and tremble,
Than him thou seeest not, — thine
angel, bold
Yet meek, whose ever-lifted eyes behold
The Ever-loving's face.

WINE OF CYPRUS.

GIVEN TO ME BY H. S. BOYD, AUTHOR OF
"SELECT PASSAGES FROM THE GREEK
FATHERS," ETC., TO WHOM THESE STAN-
ZAS ARE ADDRESSED.

I.

If old Bacchus were the speaker,
He would tell you, with a sigh,
Of the Cyprus in this beaker
I am sipping like a fly, —
Like a fly or gnat on Ida
At the hour of goblet-pledge,
By queen Juno brushed aside, a
Full white arm-sweep, from the
edge.

II.

Sooth, the drinking should be ampler
When the drink is so divine,
And some deep-mouthed Greek exemplar
Would become your Cyprus wine;
Cyclops' mouth might plunge aright
in,
While his one eye over-leered;
Nor too large were mouth of Titan,
Drinking rivers down his beard.

III.

Pan might dip his head so deep in,
That his ears alone pricked out;
Fauns around him pressing, leaping,
Each one pointing to his throat;

While the Naiads, like Bacchantes,
Wild, with urns thrown out to waste,
Cry, "O earth, that thou wouldest grant us
Springs to keep, of such a taste!"

IV.

But for me, I am not worthy
After gods and Greeks to drink,
And my lips are pale and earthy
To go bathing from this brink:
Since you heard them speak the last time,
They have faded from their blooms,
And the laughter of my pastime
Has learnt silence at the tombs.

V.

Ah, my friend ! the antique drinkers
Crowned the cup, and crowned the brow.
Can I answer the old thinkers
In the forms they thought of, now ?
Who will fetch from garden-encloses
Some new garlands while I speak,
That the forehead, crowned with roses,
May strike scarlet down the cheek ?

VI.

Do not mock me ! with my mortal,
Suits no wreath again, indeed:
I am sad-voiced as the turtle
Which Amareon used to feed;
Yet, as that same bird demurely
Wet her beak in cup of his,
So, without a garland, surely
I may touch the brim of this.

VII.

Go ! let others praise the Chian;
This is soft as Muse's string;
This is tawny as Rhea's lion;
This is rapid as his spring;
Bright as Paphia's eyes e'er met us,
Light as ever trod her feet;
And the brown bees of Hyettus
Make their honey not so sweet.

VIII.

Very copious are my praises,
Though I sip it like a fly.
Ah ! but, sipping, times and place
Change before me suddenly.

As Ulysses' old libation
Drew the ghosts from every part,
So your Cyprus wine, dear Grecian,
Stirs the Hades of my heart.

IX.

And I think of those long mornings
Which my thought goes far to seek,
When, betwixt the folio's turnings,
Solemn flowed the rhythmic Greek:
Past the pane the mountain spreading,
Swept the sheep-bell's tinkling
noise,
While a girlish voice was reading
Somewhat low for *us* and *os*.

X.

Then what golden hours were for us !
While we sate together there;
How the white vests of the chorus
Seemed to wave up a live air !
How the cothurns trod majestic
Down the deep iambic lines,
And the rolling anapestic
Curled like vapor over shrines !

XI.

Oh, our *Æschylus*, the thunderous !
How he drove the bolted breath
Through the cloud, to wedge it ponderous
In the gnarled oak beneath !
Oh, our Sophocles, the royal !
Who was born to monarch's place,
And who made the whole world loyal,
Less by kingly power than grace.

XII.

Our Euripides, the human,
With his droppings of warm tears,
And his touches of things common
Till they rose to touch the spheres !
Our Theocritus, our Bion,
And our Pindar's shining goals ! —
These were cup-bearers undying,
Of the wine that's meant for souls.

XIII.

And my Plato, the divine one,
If men know the gods aright
By their motions as they shine on
With a glorious trail of light !

And your noble Christian bishops,
Who mouthed grandly the last
Greek,
Though the sponges on their hyssops
Were distent with wine — too weak.

XIV.

Yet your Chrysostom, you praised him
As a liberal mouth of gold;
And your Basil, you upraised him
To the height of speakers old:
And we both praised Heliodorus
For his secret of pure lies, --
Who forged first his linked stories
In the heat of lady's eyes.

XV.

And we both praised your Synesius
For the fire shot up his odes,
Though the Church was scarce propitious
As he whistled dogs and gods.
And we both praised Nazianzen
For the fervid heart and speech;
Only I eschewed his glancing
At the lyre hung out of reach.

XVI.

Do you mind that deed of Até
Which you bound me to so fast,
Reading "De Virginitate."
From the first line to the last ?
How I said at ending, solemn,
As I turned and looked at you,
That St. Simeon on the column
Had had somewhat less to do ?

XVII.

For we sometimes gently wrangled,
Very gently, be it said,
Since our thoughts were disentangled
By no breaking of the thread ;
And I charged you with extortions
On the nobler names of old ;
Ay, and sometimes thought your Por-
sons
Stained' the purple they would fold.

XVIII.

For the rest — a mystic moaning
Kept Cassandra at the gate,
With wild eyes the vision shone in,
And wide nostrils scenting fate.
And Prometheus, bound in passion
By brute force to the blind stone,
Showed us looks of invocation
Turned to ocean and the sun.

xix.

And Medea we saw burning
 At her nature's planted stake;
And proud Oedipus fate-scouring
 While the cloud came on to break —
 While the cloud came on slow, slower,
 Till he stood disrowned, resigned !
But the reader's voice dropped lower
 When the poet called him **BLIND.**

xx.

Ah, my gossip! you were older,
 And more learned, and a man ;
 Yet that shadow, the infolder
 Of your quiet eyelids, ran
 Both our spirits to one level;
 And I turned from hill and lea.
And the summer-sun's green revel,
 To your eyes that could not see.

xxi.

Now Christ bless you with the one
 light
 Which goes shining night and day !
 May the flowers which grow in sun-
 light
 Shed their fragrance in your way !
 Is it not right to remember
 All your kindness, friend of mine,
 When we two sate in the chamber,
 And the poets poured us wine ?

xxii.

So, to come back to the drinking
 Of this Cyprus, — it is well;
But those memories, to my thinking
 Make a better omenel;
And, whoever be the speaker,
 None can murmur with a sigh
 That, in drinking from *that* beaker,
 I am sipping like a fly.

A RHAPSODY OF LIFE'S PROGRESS.

"Fill all the stops of life with tuneful breath."
*Poems on Man, by Cornelius Mathews.*¹

I.

We are borne into life: it is sweet, it
 is strange.
 We lie still on the knee of a mild
 mystery

¹ A small volume, by an American poet, —
 as remarkable in thought and manner for a

Which smiles with a change;
 But we doubt not of changes, we
 know not of spaces;
 The heavens seem as near as our own
 mother's face is,
 And we think we could touch all the
 stars that we see;
 And the milk of our mother is white
 on our mouth;
 And with small childish hands we are
 turning around
 The apple of life which another has
 found:
 It is warm with our touch, not with
 sun of the south,
 And we count, as we turn it, the red
 side for four.
 O Life, O Beyond,
 Thou art sweet, thou art strange
 evermore !

II.

Then all things look strange in the
 pure golden ether;
 We walk through the gardens with
 hands linked together,
 And the lilies look large as the
 trees;
 And as loud as the birds sing the
 bloom-loving bees;
 And the birds sing like angels, so
 mystical-fine,
 And the cedars are brushing the
 archangels' feet,
 And time is eternity, love is divine,
 And the world is complete.
 Now, God bless the child — father,
 mother, respond !
 O Life, O Beyond,
 Thou art strange, thou art sweet !

III.

Then we leap on the earth with the
 armor of youth,
 And the earth rings again;
 And we breathe out, "O beauty!"
 we cry out, "O truth!"
 And the bloom of our lips drops with
 wine,
 And our blood runs amazed 'neath
 the calm hyaline:
 The earth cleaves to the foot, the sun
 burns to the brain, —
 What is this exultation? and what
 this despair?
 The strong pleasure is smiting the
 nerves into pain,
 vital sinewy vigor, as the right arm of Pathfinder. 1844.

And we drop from the fair as we climb to the fair,
And we lie in a trance at its feet;
And the breath of an angel cold-
• piercing the air
Breathes fresh on our faces in swoon,
And we think him so near, he is this side the sun,
And we wake to a whisper self-murmured and fond,
O Life, O Beyond,
Thou art strange, thou art sweet !

iv.

And the winds and the waters in pastoral measures
Go winding around us, with roll upon roll,
Till the soul lies within in a circle of pleasures
Which hideth the soul;
And we run with the stag, and we leap with the horse,
And we swim with the fish through the broad water-course,
And we strike with the falcon, and hunt with the hound,
And the joy which is in us flies out by a wound.
And we shout so aloud, "We exult, we rejoice."
That we lose the low moan of our brothers around:
And we shout so adeep down creation's profound,
We are deaf to God's voice.
And we bind the rose-garland on forehead and ears.
Yet we are not ashamed;
And the dew of the roses that runneth unblamed
Down our cheeks is not taken for tears.
Help us, God ! trust us, man ! love us, woman ! "I hold
Thy small head in my hands, — with its grapelets of gold
Growing bright through my fingers, — like altar for oath,
'Neath the vast golden spaces like witnessing faces
That watch the eternity strong in the troth —
I love thee, I leave thee,
Live for thee, die for thee !
I prove thee, deceive thee,
Undo evermore thee !

Help me, God ! slay me, man ! — one is mourning for both."
And we stand up, though young, near the funeral-sheet
Which covers old Cæsar and old Pharamond;
And death is so nigh us, life cools from its heat.
O Life, O Beyond,
Art thou fair, art thou sweet ?

v.

Then we act to a purpose, we spring up erect;
We will tame the wild mouths of the wilderness-steeds;
We will plough up the deep in the ships double-decked;
We will build the great cities, and do the great deeds,
Strike the steel upon steel, strike the soul upon soul,
Strike the dole on the weal, overcoming the dole.
Let the cloud meet the cloud in a grand thunder-roll !
"While the eagle of thought rides the tempest in scorn,
Who cares if the lightning is burning the corn ?
Let us sit on the thrones
In a purple sublimity,
And grind down men's bones
To pale unanimity.
Speed me, God ! serve me, man ! I am god over men ;
When I speak in my cloud, none shall answer again :
'Neath the stripe and the bond,
Lie and inourn at my feet !"
O Life, O Beyond,
Thou art strange, thou art sweet !

vi.

Then we grow into thought, and with inward ascensions
Touch the bounds of our being.
We lie in the dark here, swathed doubly around
With our sensual relations and social conventions,
Yet are 'ware of a sight, yet are 'ware of a sound
Beyond hearing and seeing;
Are aware that a Hades rolls deep on all sides
With its infinite tides

About and above us, until the strong arch
 Of our life creaks and bends as if ready for falling,
 And through the dim rolling we hear the sweet calling
 Of spirits that speak in a soft under-tongue
 The sense of the mystical march.
 And we cry to them softly, "Come nearer, come nearer,
 And lift up the lap of this dark, and speak clearer,
 And teach us the song that ye sung!"
 And we smile in our thought as they answer or no;
 For to dream of a sweetness is sweet as to know.
 Wonders breathe in our face,
 And we ask not their name;
 Love takes all the blame
 Of the world's prison-place;
 And we sing back the songs as we guess them, aloud;
 And we send up the lark of our music that cuts
 Untired through the cloud,
 To beat with its wings at the lattice heaven shuts:
 Yet the angels look down, and the mortals look up,
 As the little wings beat;
 And the poet is blessed with their pity or hope.
 'Twixt the heavens and the earth can a poet despone?
 O Life, O Beyond,
 Thou art strange, thou art sweet!

VII.

Then we wring from our souls their applicative strength,
 And bend to the cord the strong bow of our ken,
 And, bringing our lives to the level of others,
 Hold the cup we have filled to their uses at length.
 "Help me, God! love me, man! I am man among men,
 And my life is a pledge
 Of the ease of another's!"
 the fire and the water we drive out the steam
 With a rush and a roar and the speed of a dream;

And the car without horses, the car without wings,
 Roars onward, and flies
 On its gray iron edge
 'Neath the heat of a thought sitting still in our eyes;
 And our hand knots in air, with the bridge that it flings,
 Two peaks far disrupted by ocean and skies,
 And, lifting a fold of the smooth-flowing Thames,
 Draws under the world with its tormoils and potthers,
 While the swans float on softly, untouched in their calms
 By humanity's hum at the root of the springs.
 And with reachings of thought we reach down to the deeps
 Of the souls of our brothers,
 We teach them full words with our slow-moving lips,
 "God," "Liberty," "Truth," — which they hearken and think,
 And work into harmony, link upon link,
 Till the silver meets round the earth gelid and dense,
 Shedding sparks of electric responding intense
 On the dark of eclipse.
 Then we hear through the silence and glory afar,
 As from shores of a star
 In aphelion, the new generations that cry
 Disenthralled by our voice to harmonious reply,
 "God," "Liberty," "Truth!"
 We are glorious forsooth,
 And our name has a seat,
 Though the shroud should be donned.
 O Life, O Beyond,
 Thou art strange, thou art sweet!

VIII.

Help me, God! help me, man! I am low, I am weak;
 Death loosens my sinews, and creeps in my veins;
 My body is cleft by these wedges of pains
 From my spirit's serene,
 And I feel the externe and insensate creep in
 On my organized clay;
 I sob not, nor shriek,
 Yet I faint fast away:

I am strong in the spirit, deep-thoughted, clear-eyed;
I could walk, step for step, with an angel beside,
On the heaven-heights of truth.
Oh, the soul keeps its youth;
But the body faints sore, it is tried in the race.
It sinks from the chariot ere reaching the goal,
It is weak, it is cold,
The rein drops from its hold,
It sinks back with the death in its face.
On, chariot! on, soul!
Ye are all the more fleet;
Be alone at the goal
Of the strange and the sweet!

IX.

Love us, God! love us man! we believe, we achieve!
Let us love, let us live;
For the acts correspond;
We are glorious, and die;
And again on the knee of a mild mystery,
That smiles with a change,
Here we lie.
O DEATH, O BEYOND,
Thou art sweet, thou art strange!

A LAY OF THE EARLY ROSE.

—“Discordance that can accord.”
ROMANCE OF THE ROSE

A rose once grew within
A garden April-green,
In her loneliness, in her loneliness,
And the fairer for that oneness.

A white rose delicate
On a tall bough and straight;
Early-comer, early-comer,
Never waiting for the sunnertide.

Her pretty gestes did win
South winds to let her in,
In her loneliness, in her loneliness,
All the fairer for that oneness.

“For if I wait,” said she,
“Till time for roses be,
For the moss-rose and the musk-rose,
Maiden-blush and royal-dusk rose,

“What glory, then, for me
In such a company?
Roses plenty, roses plenty,
And one nightingale for twenty!

“Nay, let me in,” said she,
“Before the rest are free,
In my loneliness, in my loneliness,
All the fairer for that oneness.

“For I would lonely stand,
Uplifting my white hand,
On a mission, on a mission,
To declare the coming vision.

“Upon which lifted sign
What worship will be mine!
What addressing, what caressing,
And what thanks and praise and blessing!

“A windlike joy will rush
Through every tree and bush,
Bending softly in affection
And spontaneous benediction.

“Insects, that only may
Live in a sunbright ray,
To my whiteness, to my whiteness,
Shall be drawn as to a brightness,

“And every moth and bee
Approach me reverently,
Wheeling o'er me, wheeling o'er me,
Coronals of motioned glory.

“Three larks shall leave a cloud,
To my whiter beauty vowed,
Singing gladly all the moontide,
Never waiting for the suntide.

“Ten nightingales shall flee
Their woods for love of me,
Singing sadly all the suntide,
Never waiting for the moontide.

“I ween the very skies
Will look down with surprise,
When below on earth they see me
With my starry aspect dreamy.

“And earth will call her flowers
To hasten out of doors,

By their courtesies and sweet-smelling,
To give grace to my foretelling."

So praying, did she win
South winds to let her in,
In her loneliness, in her loneliness,
And the fairer for that oneness.

But ah, alas for her !
No thing did minister
To her praises, to her praises,
More than might unto a daisy's.

No tree nor bush was seen
To boast a perfect green,
Scarcely having, scarcely having.
One leaf broad enough for waving.

The little flies did crawl
Along the southern wall,
Faintly shifting, faintly shifting,
Wings scarce long enough for lifting.

The lark, too high or low,
I ween, did miss her so,
With his nest down in the gorse,
And his song in the star-courses.

The nightingale did please
To loiter beyond seas;
Guess him in the Happy islands,
Learning music from the silence.

Only the bee, forsooth,
Came in the place of both,
Doing honor, doing honor,
To the honey-dews upon her.

The skies looked coldly down
As on a royal crown;
Then, with drop for drop, at leisure,
They began to rain for pleasure.

Whereat the earth did seem
To waken from a dream,
Winter-frozen, winter-frozen,
Her unquiet eyes unclosing,—

Said to the Rose, " Ha, snow !
And art thou fallen so ? —
Thou, who wast enthroned stately
All along my mountains lately ?

" Holla, thou world-wide snow !
And art thou wasted so,
With a little bough to catch thee,
And a little bee to watch thee ? "

— Poor Rose, to be misknown !
Would she had ne'er been blown,
In her loneliness, in her loneliness,
All the sadder for that oneness.

Some word she tried to say,
Some no . . . ah, well-away !
But the passion did o'ercome her,
And the fair, frail leaves dropped from
her,

— Dropped from her, fair and mute,
Close to a poet's foot,
Who beheld them, smiling slowly,
As at something sad, yet holy, —

Said, " Verily, and thus
It chances too with us
Poets, singing sweetest snatches,
While that deaf men keep the
watches;

“ Vaunting to come before
Our own age evermore,
In a loneliness, in a loneliness,
And the nobler for that oneness.

“ Holy in voice and heart,
To high ends set apart;
All unmated, all unmated,
Just because so consecrated.

“ But if alone we be,
Where is our empery ?
And, if none can reach our stature,
Who can mete our lofty nature ?

“ What bell will yield a tone,
Swung in the air alone ?
If no brazen clapper bringing,
Who can hear the chimed ringing ?

“ What angel but would seem
To sensual eyes ghost-dim ?
And, without assimilation,
Vain is interpenetration.

“ And thus, what can we do,
Poor rose and poet too,
Who both antedate our mission
In an unprepared season ?

“ Drop, leaf ! be silent, song !
Cold things we come among;
We must warm them, we must warm
them,
Ere we ever hope to charm them.”

"Howbeit" (here his face
Lightened around the place,
So to mark the outward turning
Of its spirit's inward burning)

"Something it is, to hold
In God's worlds manifold,
First revealed to creature-duty,
Some new form of his mild beauty

"Whether that form respect
The sense or intellect,
Holy be, in mood or meadow,
The chief beauty's sign and shadow !

"Holy in me and thee,
Rose fallen from the tree,
Though the world stand dumb around
us,
All unable to expound us.

"Though none us deign to bless,
Blessed are we, mathless,
Blessed still and consecrated
In that, rose, we were created.

"Oh, shame to poet's lays
Sung for the dole of praise,—
Hoarsely sung upon the highway,
With that *obolum da mihi*!"

"Shame, shame, to poet's soul,
Pining for such a dole,
When heaven-chosen to inherit
The high throne of a chief spirit !

"Sit still upon your thrones,
O ye poetic ones !
And if, sooth, the world decry you,
Let it pass unchallenged by you.

"Ye to yourselves suffice,
Without its flatteries.
Self-contentedly approve you
Unto Him who sits above you,—

"In prayers that upward mount
Like to a fair-sunned fount,
Which, in gushing back upon you,
Hath an upper music won you,—

"In faith, that still perceives
No rose can sild her leaves.
Far less, poet fall from mission,
With an unfulfilled fruition,—

"In hope, that apprehends
An end beyond these ends,

And great uses rendered duly
By the meanest song sung truly,—

"In thanks, for all the good
By poets understood,
For the sound of seraphs moving
Down the hidden depths of loving,—

"For sights of things away
Through fissures of the clay,
Promised things which *shall be given*
And sung over up in heaven,—

"For life so lovely vain,
For death, which breaks the chain,
For this sense of present sweetness,
And this yearning to completeness !"

THE POET AND THE BIRD.

A FABLE.

I.

SAYD a people to a poet, "Go out
from among us straightway !
While we are thinking earthly
things, thou singest of divine:
There's a little fair brown nightin-
gale who, sitting in the gateway,
Makes fitter music to our ear than
any song of thine !"

II.

The poet went out weeping; the
nightingale ceased chanting:
"Now wherefore, O thou nightin-
gale, is all thy sweetness
done?"
— "I cannot sing my earthly things,
the heavenly poet wanting,
Whose highest harmony includes
the lowest under sun."

III.

The poet went out weeping, and died
abroad, bereft there;
The bird flew to his grave, and died
amid a thousand wails:
And when I last came by the place, I
swear the music left there
Was only of the poet's song, and
not the nightingale's.

THE CRY OF THE HUMAN.

I.

"**T**HREE is no God," the foolish saith,
But none, "There is no sorrow;"
And Nature oft the cry of faith
In bitter need will borrow.
Eyes which the preacher could not
school
By wayside graves are raised;
And lips say, "God be pitiful,"
Who ne'er said, "God be praised."
Be pitiful, O God !

II.

The tempest stretches from the steep
The shadow of its coming;
The beasts grow tame, and near us
creep,
As help were in the human:
Yet, while the cloud-wheels roll and
grind,
We spirits tremble under—
The hills have echoes, but we find
No answer for the thunder
Be pitiful, O God !

III.

The battle hurtles on the plains,
Earth feels new scythes upon her;
We reap our brothers for the wains,
And call the harvest — honor:
Draw face to face, front line to line,
One image all inherit,
Then kill, curse on, by that same sign,
Clay — clay, and spirit — spirit.
Be pitiful, O God !

IV.

The plague runs festering through the
town,
And never a bell is tolling,
And corpses, jostled 'neath the moon,
Nod to the dead-cart's rolling;
The young child calleth for the cup,
The strong man brings it weeping;
The mother from her babe looks up,
And shrieks away its sleeping.
Be pitiful, O God !

v

The plague of gold strikes far and
near,
And deep and strong it enters;
This purple chimar which we wear,
Makes madder than the centaur's:
Our thoughts grow blank, our words
grow strange,
We cheer the pale gold-diggers,
Each soul is worth so much on
'Change,
And marked, like sheep, with fig-
ures.
Be pitiful, O God !

VI.

The curse of gold upon the land
The lack of bread enforces;
The rail-cars snort from strand to
strand,
Like more of death's white horses;
The rich preach "rights" and "future
days,"
And hear no angel scoffing;
The poor die mute, with starving gaze
On corn-ships in the offing.
Be pitiful, O God !

VII.

We meet together at the feast,
To private mirth betake us;
We stare down in the winecup, lest
Some vacant chair should shake us;
We name delight, and pledge it
round —
"It shall be ours to-morrow!"
God's seraphs, do your voices sound
As sad in naming sorrow?
Be pitiful, O God !

VIII.

We sit together, with the skies,
The steadfast skies, above us,
We look into each other's eyes,
"And how long will you love us?"
The eyes grow dim with prophecy,
The voices, low and breathless, —
"Till death us part!" O words, to be
Our best, for love the deathless!
Be pitiful, O God !

IX.

We tremble by the harmless bed
Of one loved and departed;
Our tears drop on the lips that said
Last night, "Be stronger-hearted!"

O God, to clasp those fingers close,
And yet to feel so lonely !
To see a light upon such brows,
Which is the daylight only !
Be pitiful, O God !

X.

The happy children come to us,
And look up in our faces;
They ask us, " Was it thus, and thus,
When we were in their places ?"
We cannot speak; we see anew
The hills we used to live in,
And feel our mother's smile press
through
The kisses she is giving.
Be pitiful, O God !

XI.

We pray together at the kirk
For mercy, mercy solely;
Hands weary with the evil work,
We lift them to the Holy.
The corpse is calm below our knee,
Its spirit bright before Thee:
Between them, worse than either, we,
Without the rest or glory.
Be pitiful, O God !

XII.

We leave the communing of men,
The murmur of the passions,
And live alone, to live again
With endless generations:
Are we so brave ? — The sea and sky
In silence lift their mirrors,
And, glassed therein, our spirits high
Recoil from their own terrors.
Be pitiful, O God !

XIII.

We sit on hills our childhood wist,
Woods, hamlets, streams, beholding:
The sun strikes through the farthest
mist
The city's spire to golden:
The city's golden spire it was
When hope and health were strong-
est;
But now it is the churchyard grass
We look upon the longest.
Be pitiful, O God !

XIV.

And soon all vision waxeth dull;
Men whisper, " He is dying."
We cry no more, " Be pitiful !"
We have no strength for crying —
No strength, no need. Then, soul of
mine,
Look up, and triumph rather:
Lo, in the depth of God's divine
The Son adjures the Father,
BE PITIFUL, O GOD !

A PORTRAIT.

"One name is Elizabeth." — BEN JONSON.

I WILL paint her as I see her.
Ten times have the lilies blown
Since she looked upon the sun.

And her face is lily-clear,
Lily-shaped, and dropped in duty
To the law of its own beauty.

Oval cheeks encolored faintly,
Which a trail of golden hair
Keeps from fading off to air;

And a forehead fair and saintly,
Which two blue eyes undershine,
Like meek prayers before a shrine.

Face and figure of a child,
Though too calm, you think, and
tender,
For the childhood you would lend
her.

Yet child-simple, undefiled,
Frank, obedient, waiting still
On the turnings of your will.

Moving light, as all young things,—
As young birds, or early wheat
When the wind blows over it.

Only, free from flutterings
Of loud mirth that scorneth meas-
ure,
Taking love for her chief pleasure.

Choosing pleasures for the rest,
Which come softly, just as she
When she nestles at your knee.

Quiet talk she liketh best,
In a bower of gentle looks,
Watering flowers, or reading books.

And her voice, it murmurs lowly,
As a silver stream may run,
Which yet feels, you feel, the sun.

And her smile, it seems half holy,
As if drawn from thoughts more far
Than our common jestings are.

And, if any poet knew her,
He would sing of her with falls
Used in lovely madrigals.

And, if any painter drew her,
He would paint her unaware
With a halo round the hair.

And, if reader read the poem,
He would whisper, "You have
done a
Consecrated little Una."

And a dreamer (did you show him
That same picture) would exclaim,
"Tis my angel, with a name!"

And a stranger, when he sees her
In the street even, smileth stilly,
Just as you would at a hly.

And all voices that address her
Soften, sleeken every word,
As if speaking to a bird.

And all fancies yearn to cover
The hard earth whereon she passes,
With the thymy-scented grasses.

And all hearts do pray, "God love
her!"
Ay, and always, in good sooth,
We may all be sure He both.

CONFessions.

I.
FACE to face in my chamber, my
silent chamber, I saw her;
God and she and I only, there I sate
down to draw her
Soul through the clefts of confession,
"Speak, I am holding thee fast,
As the angel of resurrection shall do
it at the last!"

"My cup is blood-red
With my sin," she said,
"And I pour it out to the bitter lees,
As if the angels of judgment stood
over me strong at the last,
Or as thou wert as these."

II.
When God smote his hands together,
and struck out thy soul as a spark
Into the organized glory of things,
from deeps of the dark,
Say, didst thou shine, didst thou
burn, didst thou honor the
power in the form,
As the star does at night, or the fire-
fly, or even the little ground-
worm?
"I have sinned," she said,
"For my seed-light shed
Has smouldered away from His first
decrees.
The cypress praiseth the firefly, the
ground-leaf praiseth the worm:
I am viler than these."

III.
When God on that sin had pity, and
did not trample thee straight
With his wild rains beating and
drenching thy light found inadequate;
When he only sent thee the north
wind, a little searching and
chill,
To quicken thy flame,—didst thou
kindle and flash to the heights
of his will?
"I have sinned," she said,
"Unquicken'd, unspread,
My fire dropt down, and I wept on
my knees:
I only said of his winds of the north
as I shrank from their chill,
What delight is in these?"



"And if any painter drew her,
He would paint her unaware
With a halo round the hair." — Page 384.

IV.

When God on that sin had pity, and
did not meet it as such,
But tempered the wind to thy uses,
and softened the world to thy
touch,
At least thou wast moved in thy soul,
though, unable to prove it afar,
Thou couldst carry thy light like a
jewel, not giving it out like a
star?
 “ I have sinned,” she said,
 “And not merited
The gift he gives, by the grace he
sees!
The mune-cave praiseth the jewel,
the hillside praiseth the star:
I am viler than these.”

V.

Then I cried aloud in my passion,
Unthankful and impotent crea-
ture,
To throw up thy scorn unto God
through the rents in thy beg-
garly nature!
If he, the All-giving and Loving, is
served so unduly, what then
Hast thou done to the weak and the
false and the changing,—thy
fellows of men?
 “ I have loved,” she said,
 (Words bowing her head
As the wind the wet acacia-trees)
“ I saw God sitting above me, but I
 . . . I sate among men,
And I have loved these.”

VI.

Again with a lifted voice, like a
choral trumpet, that takes
The lowest note of a viol that trem-
bles, and triumphing breaks
On the air with it solemn and clear,
 “ Behold! I have sinned not in
this!
Where I loved, I have loved much
and well: I have verily loved
not amiss
 Let the living,” she said,
 “ Inquire of the dead,
In the house of the pale-fronted
images:
My own true dead will answer for
me, that I have not loved amiss
In my love for all these.

VII.

“ The least touch of their hands in
the morning, I keep it by day
and by night;
Their least step on the stair, at the
door, still throbs through me,
if ever so light;
Their least gift which they left to
my childhood, far off in the
long-ago years,
Is now turned from a toy to a relic,
and seen through the crystals
of tears.
 Dig the snow,” she said,
 “ For my churchyard bed;
Yet I, as I sleep, shall not fear to
freeze,
If one only of these my beloveds
shall love me with heart-warm
tears,
As I have loved these!”

VIII.

“ If I angered any among them, from
thenceforth my own life was
sore;
If I fell by chance from their pres-
ence, I clung to their memory
more:
Their tender I often felt holy, their
bitter I sometimes called sweet;
And, whenever their heart has refused
me, I fell down straight at their
feet.
 I have loved,” she said:
 “ Man is weak, God is dread;
Yet the weak man dies with his
spirit at ease,
Having poured such an unguent of
love but once on the Saviour’s
feet,
As I lavished for these.”

IX.

Go, I cried, thou hast chosen the hu-
man, and left the divine!
Then, at least, have the human shared
with thee their wild berry-wine?
Have they loved back thy love, and,
when strangers approached
thee with blame,
Have they covered thy fault with
their kisses, and loved thee the
same?
 But she shrunk and said,
 “ God over my head

Must sweep in the wrath of his
judgment-seas,
If He shall deal with me sinning but
only indeed the same,
And no gentler than these."

LOVED ONCE.

I.

I CLASSED, appraising once,
Earth's lamentable sounds,—the
well-aday,
The jarring yea and nay,
The fall of kisses on unanswered
clay,
The sobbed farewell, the welcome
mournfuller;
But all did leaven the air
With a less bitter leaven of sure
despair
Than these words, "I loved ONCE."

II.

And who saith "I loved ONCE"?
Not angels, whose clear eyes, love,
love, foresee,
Love, through eternity,
And by To Love do apprehend To Be.
Not God, called Love, his noble
crown-naine casting
A light too broad for blasting:
The great God changing not from
everlasting,
Saith never, "I loved ONCE."

III.

Oh, never is "Loved ONCE"
Thy word, thou Victim-Christ, mis-
prized friend!
Thy cross and curse may rend,
But, having loved, thou lovest to the
end.
This is man's saying,—man's: too
weak to move
One spher'd star above,
Man desecrates the eternal God-word
Love
By his No More and Once.

IV.

How say ye, "We loved once,"
Blasphemers? Is your earth not cold
enow,
Mourners, without that snow?
Ah, friends, and would ye wrong
each other so?
And could ye say of some whose
love is known,
Whose prayers have met your own,
Whose tears have fallen for you,
whose smiles have shone
So long, "We loved them ONCE"?

V.

Could ye, "We loved her once,"
Say calm of me, sweet friends, when
out of sight?
When hearts of better right
Stand in between me and your happy
light?
Or when, as flowers kept too long in
the shade,
Ye find my colors fade,
And all that is not love in me de-
cayed?
Such words,—Ye loved me ONCE!

VI.

Could ye, "We loved her once,"
Say cold of me when further put
away
In earth's sepulchral clay,
When mute the lips which deprecate
to-day?
Not so! not then—least then! When
life is shrien,
And death's full joy is given,
Of those who sit and love you up in
heaven,
Say no! "We loved them once."

VII.

Say never, ye loved ONCE:
God is too near above, the grave, be-
neath,
And all our moments breathe
Too quick in mysteries of life and
death
For such a word. The eternities
avenge
Affections light of range.
There comes no change to justify
that change,
Whatever comes,—Loved ONCE!

VIII.

And yet that same word ONCE
Is humanly acceptive. Kings have
said,
Shaking a discrowned head,
"We ruled once,"—dotards, "We
once taught and led;"
Cripples once danced i' the vines;
and bards approved
Were once by scornings moved:
But love strikes one hour — LOVE !
those *never* loved
Who dream that they loved ONCE.

Branched with corridors sublime,
Flecked with winding stairs,
Such as children wish to climb
Following their own prayers.

V.

In the mutest of the house
I will have my chamber;
Silence at the door shall use
Evening's light of amber,
Solemnizing every mood,
Softening in degree,
Turning sadness into good
As I turn the key.

VI.

Be my chamber tapestried
With the showers of summer,
Close, but soundless, glorified
When the sunbeams come here
Wandering harpers, harping on
Waters stringed for such,
Drawing color for a tune,
With a vibrant touch.

VII.

Bring a shadow green and still
From the chestnut-forest;
Bring a purple from the hill
When the heat is sorest;
Spread them out from wall to wall,
Carpet-wove around,
Whereupon the foot shall fall
In light instead of sound.

VIII.

Bring fantastic cloudlets home
From the noontide zenith,
Ranged for sculptures round the room,
Named as Fancy weeneth;
Some be Junos without eyes,
Naiads without sources;
Some be birds of paradise;
Some, Olympian horses.

IX.

Bring the dews the birds shake off
Waking in the hedges;
Those too, perfumed for a proof,
From the lilies' edges;
From our England's field and moor
Bring them calm and white in,
Whence to form a mirror pure
For love's self-delighting.

III.

Build the entrance high and proud,
Darkening, and then brightening,
Of a riven thunder-cloud,
Veined by the lightning;
Use one with an iris-stain
For the door so thin,
Turning to a sound like rain
As I enter in.

IV.

Build a spacious hall thereby
Boldly, never fearing;
Use the blue place of the sky
Which the wind is clearing :

x.

Bring a gray cloud from the east,
Where the lark is singing,
(Something of the song at least
Unlost in the bringing;)
That shall be a morning-chair
Poet-dream may sit in
When it leans out on the air,
Unrhymed and unwritten.

xi.

Bring the red cloud from the sun,
While he sinketh, catch it;
That shall be a couch, with one
Sidelong star to watch it,—
Fit for poet's finest thought
At the curfew sounding;
Things unseen being ne'er brought
Than the seen around him.

xii.

Poet's thought, not poet's sigh —
'Las, they come together!
Cloudy walls divide and fly,
As in April weather.
Capola and column proud,
Structure bright to see,
Gone! except that moonlit cloud
To which I looked with *thee*.

xiii.

Let them! Wipe such visionings
From the fancy's cartel;
Love secures some fairer things
Dowered with his immortal.
The sun may darken, heaven be
bow'd;
But still unchanged shall be,
Here, in my soul, that moonlit
cloud
To which I looked with *THEIR*!

A SABBATH MORNING AT SEA.

i.

THE ship went on with solemn face;
To meet the darkness on the deep
The solemn ship went onward;
I bowed down weary in the place;

For parting tears and present sleep
Had weighed mine eyelids downward.

ii.

Thick sleep which shut all dreams
from me,
And kept my inner self apart,
And quiet from emotion,
Then brake away, and left me free,
Made conscious of a human heart
Betwixt the heaven and ocean.

iii.

The new sight, the new wondrous
sight!
The waters round me, turbulent,
The skies impassive o'er me,
Calm in a moonless, sunless light,
Half-glorified by that intent
Of holding the day-glory!

iv.

Two pale thin clouds did stand upon
The meeting line of sea and sky,
With aspect still and mystic:
I think they did foresee the sun,
And rested on their prophecy
In quietude majestic,

v.

Then flushed to radiance where they
stood,
Like statues by the open tomb
Of shining saints half risen.
The sun! he came up to be viewed,
And sky and sea made mighty room
To inaugurate the vision.

vi.

I oft had seen the dawndlight run
As red wine through the hills, and
break
Through many a mist's inurning;
But here no earth profaned the sun:
Heaven, ocean, did alone partake
The sacrament of morning.

vii.

Away with thoughts fantastical!
I would be humble to my worth,
Self-guarded as self-doubted:
Though here no earthly shadows fall,
I, joying, grieving without earth,
May desecrate without it.

viii.

God's sabbath morning sweeps the waves;
I would not praise the pageant high,
Yet miss the dedicature:
I, carried toward the sunless graves
By force of natural things—should I
Exult in only nature?

ix.

And could I bear to sit alone
'Mid Nature's fixed benignities.
While my warm pulse was moving?
Too dark thou art, O glittering sun,
Too strait ye are, capacious seas,
To satisfy the loving!

x.

It seems a better lot than so
To sit with friends beneath the beech,
And feel them dear and dearer;
Or follow children as they go
In pretty pairs, with softened speech,
As the church-bells ring nearer.

xi.

Love me, sweet friends, this sabbath day!
The sea sings round me while ye roll:
Afar the hymn unaltered,
And kneel where once I knelt to pray,
And bless me deeper in the soul,
Because the voice has faltered.

xii.

And though this sabbath comes to me
Without the stoïd minister,
Or chanting congregation,
God's Spirit brings communion, He
Who brooded soft on waters drear,
Creator on creation.

xiii.

Himself, I think, shall draw me higher,
 Where keep the saints with harp and song
 An endless sabbath morning;
 And on that sea commixed with fire
 Oft drop their eyelids, raised too long
 To the full Godhead's burning.

A FLOWER IN A LETTER.

I.

My lonely chamber next the sea
Is full of many flowers set free
By summer's earliest duty:
Dear friends upon the garden-walk
Might stop amid their fondest talk
To pull the least in beauty.

II.

A thousand flowers, each seeming one,
That learnt by gazing on the sun
To counterfeit his shining;
Within whose leaves the holy dew
That falls from heaven has won anew
A glory in declining.

III.

Red roses, used to praises long,
Contented with the poet's song,
The nightingale's being over;
And lilies white, prepared to touch
The whitest thought, nor soil it much,
Of dreamer turned to lover.

IV.

Deep violets, you liken to
The kindest eyes that look on you,
Without a thought disloyal;
And cactuses a queen might don,
If weary of a golden crown,
And still appear as royal.

V.

Pansies for ladies all,—I wis
That none who wear such brooches
miss
A jewel in the mirror;
And tulips, children love to stretch
Their fingers down, to feel in each
Its beauty's secret nearer.

VI.

Love's language may be talked with these:
To work out choicest sentences,
No blossoms can be meetier;
And, such being uscd in Eastern bow-
ers,
Young maids may wonder if the flow-
ers
Or meanings be the sweeter.

vii.

And, such being strewn before a bride,
Her little foot may turn aside,
Their longer bloom decreeing,
Unless some voice's whispered sound
Should make her gaze upon the
ground
Too earnestly for seeing.

viii.

And, such being scattered on a grave,
Whoever mourneth there may have
A type which seemeth worthy
Of that fair body hid below,
Which bloomed on earth a time ago,
Then perished as the earthly.

ix.

And such being wreathed for worldly
feast,
Across the brimming cup some guest,
Their rainbow colors viewing,
May feel them with a silent start,
The covenant his childish heart
With Nature made, renewing.

x.

No flowers our garden'd England
bath
To match with these in bloom and
breath,
Which from the world are hiding
In sunny Devon moist with rills,—
A nursery of cloistered hills,
The elements presiding.

xi.

By Loddon's stream the flowers are
fair
That meet one gifted lady's care
With prodigal rewarding,
(For beauty is too used to run
To Mitford's bower, to want the sun
To light her through the garden).

xii.

But here, all summers are comprised;
The nightly frosts shrink exorcised
Before the priestly moonshine;
And every wind with stol'd feet,
In wandering down the alleys sweet,
Steps lightly on the sunshine,

xiii.

And (having promised Harpocrate
Among the nodding roses that
No harm shall touch his daughters)

Gives quite away the rushing sound
He dares not use upon such ground,
To ever-trickling waters

xiv.

Yet sun and wind! what can ye do
But make the leaves more brightly
show

In posies newly gathered?
I look away from all your best,
To one poor flower unlike the rest,—
A little flower half withered.

xv.

I do not think it ever was
A pretty flower,—to make the grass
Look greener where it reddened;
And now it seems ashamed to be
Alone in all this company,
Of aspect shrunk and saddened.

xvi.

A chamber-window was the spot
It grew in from a garden-pot,
Among the city shadows:
If any, tending it, might seem
To smile, 'twas only in a dream
Of nature in the meadows.

xvii.

How coldly on its head did fall
The sunshine from the city-wall
In pale refraction driven!
How sadly plashed upon its leaves
The raindrops, losing in the eaves
The first sweet news of heaven!

xviii.

And those who planted gathered it
In gemesome or in loving fit,
And sent it, as a token
Of what their city pleasures be,
For one, in Devon by the sea
And garden-blooms, to look on,

xix.

But she for whom the jest was meant,
With a grave passion innocent
Receiving what was given,—
Oh if her face she turned then,
Let none say 'twas to gaze again
Upon the flowers of Devon!

XX.

Because, whatever virtue dwells
In genial skies, warn oracles
For gardens brightly springing,—
The flower which grew beneath your
eyes,
Beloved friends, to mine supplies
A beauty worthier singing

THE MASK.

I.

I HAVE a smiling face, she said,
I have a jest for all I meet;
I have a garland for my head,
And all its flowers are sweet:
And so you call me gay, she said.

II.

Grief taught to me this smile, she
said;
And Wrong did teach this jesting
bold;
These flowers were plucked from gar-
den-bed
While a death-chime was tolled:
And what now will you say? she
said.

III.

Behind no prison-grate, she said,
Which slurs the sunshine half a
mile,
Live captives so uncomforted
As souls behind a smile.
God's pity let us pray, she said.

IV.

I know my face is bright, she said;
Such brightness dying suns diffuse:
I bear upon my forehead shed
The sign of what I lose,
The ending of my day, she said.

V.

If I dared leave this smile, she said,
And take a moan upon my mouth,
And tie a cypress round my head,
And let my tears run smooth,
It were the happier way, she said.

VI.

And since that must not be, she said,
I fain your bitter world would
leave
How calmly, calmly, smile the dead,
Who do not, therefore, grieve!
The yea of heaven is yea, she said.

VII.

But in your bitter world, she said,
Face-joy's a costly mask to wear;
'Tis bought with pangs long nourish-
ed,
And rounded to despair:
Grief's earnest makes life's play, she
said.

VIII.

Ye weep for those who weep? she
said—
Ah, fools! I bid you pass them by.
Go weep for those whose hearts have
bled
What time their eyes were dry.
Whom sadder can I say? she said.

CALLS ON THE HEART.

I.

FIRE Heart, that singest to-day
Like a bird on the first green spray,
Wilt thou go forth to the world,
Where the hawk hath his wing un-
furled,
To follow, perhaps, thy way?
Where the tamer thine own will
bind,
And, to make thee sing, will blind,
While the little hip grows for the free
behind?
Heart, wilt thou go?
—‘No, no!
Free hearts are better so.’

II.

The world, thou hast heard it told,
Has counted its robber-gold,
And the pieces stick to the hand:
The world goes riding it fair and
grand,
While the truth is bought and
sold:

World-voices east, world-voices west,
They call thee, Heart, from thine early rest,
"Come hither, come hither, and be our guest."
Heart, wilt thou go?
— "No, no!
Good hearts are calmer so."

III.

Who calleth thee, Heart? World's Strife,
With a golden heft to his knife;
World's Mirth, with a finger fine
That draws on a board in wine
Her blood-red plans of life;
World's Gain, with a brow knit down;
World's Fame with a laurel crown
Which rustles most as the leaves turn brown:
Heart, wilt thou go?
— "No, no!
Calm hearts are wiser so."

IV.

Hast heard that Proserpina
(Once fooling) was snatched away
To partake the dark king's seat,
And the tears ran fast on her feet
To think how the sun shone yesterday?
With her ankles sunken in asphodel
She wept for the roses of earth
which fell
From her lap when the wild car drove to hell.
Heart, wilt thou go?
— "No, no!
Wise hearts are warmer so."

V.

And what is this place not seen,
Where hearts may hide serene?
"Tis a fair still house well kept,
Which humble thoughts have swept,
And holy prayers made clean.
There I sit with Love in the sun,
And we two never have done
Singing sweet songs than are guessed by one."
Heart, wilt thou go?
— "No, no!
Warm hearts are fuller so."

VI.

O Heart, O Love, I fear
That love may be kept too near.
Hast heard, O heart, that tale,
How Love may be false and frail
To a heart once holden dear?
— "But this true love of mine
Clings fast as the clinging vine,
And mingles pure as the grapes in wine."

Heart, wilt thou go?
— "No, no!
Full hearts beat higher so."

VII.

O Heart, O Love, beware!
Look up, and boast not there;
For who has twirled at the pin?
'Tis the World between Death and Sin,
— The World and the world's Despair!
And Death has quickened his pace
To the hearth with a mocking face,
Familiar as Love in Love's own place.
Heart, wilt thou go?
— "Still, no!
High hearts must grieve even so."

VIII.

The house is waste to-day.—
The leaf has dropt from the spray,
The thorn prickt through to the song:
If summer doeth no wrong
The winter will, they say,
Sing, Heart! what heart replies?
In vain we were calm and wise,
If the tears unkissed stand on in our eyes.
Heart, wilt thou go?
— "Ab, no!
Grieved hearts must break even so."

IX.

If howbeit all is not lost.
The warm noon ends in frost,
And worldly tongues of promise,
Like sheep-bells die off from us
On the desert hills cloud-crossed;
Yet through the silence shall
Pierce the death-angel's call,
And "Come up hither," recover all.
Heart, wilt thou go?
— "I go!
Broken hearts triumph so."

WISDOM UNAPPLIED.

I. If I were thou, O butterfly !
And poised my purple wing to spy
The sweetest flowers that live and die,

II. I would not waste my strength on
those,
As thou; for summer has a close,
And pausies bloom not in the snows.

III. If I were thou, O working bee !
And all that honey-gold I see
Could delve from roses easily,

IV. I would not hive it at man's door,
As thou, that heirdom of my store
Should make him rich, and leave me
poor.

V. If I were thou, O eagle proud !
And screamed the thunder back
aloud,
And faced the lightning from the
cloud,

VI. I would not build my eyry-throne,
As thou, upon a crumbling stone
Which the next storm may trample
down.

VII. If I were thou, O gallant steed !
With pawing hoof and dancing head,
And eye outrunning thine own speed,

VIII. I would not meeken to the rein,
As thou, nor smooth my nostril plain
From the glad desert's snort and
strain.

IX. If I were thou, red-breasted bird,
With song at shut-up window heard,
Like love's sweet yes too long de-
ferred,

X. I would not overstay delight,
As thou, but take a swallow-flight
Till the new spring returned to sight.

XI. While yet I spake, a touch was laid
Upon my brow, whose pride did fade
As thus, methought, an angel said,—

XII. "If I were thou who sing'st this song,
Most wise for others, and most strong
In seeing right while doing wrong,

XIII. "I would not waste my cares, and
choose,
As thou,—to seek what thou must
lose,
Such gains as perish in the use.

XIV. "I would not work where none can
win,
As thou,—halfway 'twixt grief and
sin;
But look above, and judge within.

XV. "I would not let my pulse beat high,
As thou,—towards faine's regality,
Nor yet in love's great jeopardy.

XVI. "I would not champ the hard, cold bit,
As thou,—of what the world thinks
fit,
But take God's freedom, using it.

XVII. "I would not play earth's winter out,
As thou,—but gird my soul about,
And live for life past death and doubt.

XVIII. "Then sing, O singer! but allow,
Beast, fly, and bird, called foolish
now,
Aro wise (for all thy scorn) as thou."

MEMORY AND HOPE.

I.

BACK-LOOKING Memory
And prophet Hope both sprang from
out the ground,—
One, where the flashing of cherubic
sword
Fell sad in Eden's ward;
And one, from Eden earth within the
sound
Of the four rivers lapsing pleasantly,
What time the promise after curse was
said:
“Thy seed shall bruise his head.”

II.

Poor Memory's brain is wild,
As moonstruck by that flaming atmos-
phere
When she was born; her deep eyes
shine and shone
With light that conquereth sun
And stars to wainer paleness, year by
year:
With odorous gums she mixeth things
defiled;
She trampleth down earth's grasses
green and sweet
With her far-wandering feet.

III.

She plucketh many flowers,
Their beauty on her bosom's coldness
killing;
She teacheth every melancholy sound
To winds and waters round;
She droppeth tears with seed, where
man is tilling
The rugged soil in his exhausted
hours;
She smileth—ah me! in her smile
doth go
A mood of deeper woe.

IV.

Hope tripped on out of sight,
Crowned with an Eden wreath she
saw not wither,
And went a-nodding through the wil-
derness,
With brow that shone no less
Than a sea-gull's wing, brought nearer
by rough weather,
Searching the treeless rock for fruits
of light;

Her fair, quick feet being armed from
stones and cold
By slippers of pure gold.

V.

Memory did Hope much wrong,
And, while she dreamed, her slippers
stole away;
But still she wended on with mirth
unheeding,
Although her feet were bleeding,
Till Memory tracked her on a certain
day,
And with most evil eyes did search
her long
And cruelly; whereat she sank to
ground
In a stark deadly swoond.

VI.

And so my Hope were slain,
Had it not been that Thou wast stand-
ing near,
O Thou who sailest, “Live,” to crea-
tures lying
In their own blood, and dying!
For Thou her forehead to Thine heart
dost rear,
And make its silent pulses sing again,
Pouring a new light o'er her darkened
eyne,
With tender tears from Thine.

VII.

Therefore my Hope arose
From out her swoond, and gazed upon
Thy face;
And, meeting there that soft, subdu-
ing look
Which Peter's spirit shook,
Sank downward in a rapture, to em-
brace
Thy pierced hands and feet with
kisses close,
And prayed Thee to assist her ever-
more
To “reach the things before.”

VIII.

Then gavest Thou the smile
Whence angel-wings thrill quick, like
summer lightning,
Vouchsafing rest beside Thee, where
she never
From Love and Faith may sever:
Whereat the Eden crown she saw not
whitening

A time ago, though whitening all the while,
Reddened with life to hear the Voice which talked
To Adam as he walked.

HUMAN LIFE'S MYSTERY.

I.

We sow the glebe, we reap the corn,
We build the house where we may rest,
And then, at moments, suddenly
We look up to the great wide sky,
Inquiring wherfore we were born,—
For earnest, or for jest?

II.

The senses folding thick and dark
About the stifled soul within,
We guess diviner things beyond,
And yearn to them with yearning fond:
We strike out blindly to a mark
Believed in, but not seen.

III.

We vibrate to the pant and thrill
Wherewith Eternity has curled
In serpent-twine about God's seat;
While, freshening upward to his feet,
In gradual growth His full-leaved will
Expands from world to world.

IV.

And, in the tumult and excess
Of act and passion under sun,
We sometimes hear—oh, soft and far,
As silver star did touch with star—
The kiss of peace and righteousness
Through all things that are done.

V.

God keeps his holy mysteries
Just on the outside of man's dream;
In diapason slow, we think

To hear their pinions rise and sink,
While they float pure beneath his eyes,
Like swans adown a stream.

VI.

Abstractions are they, from the forms
Of his great beauty? exaltations
From his great glory? strong pre-
visions
Of what we shall be? intuitions
Of what we are, in calms and storms
Beyond our peace and passions?

VII.

Things nameless! which in passing
so
Do stroke us with a subtle grace;
We say, "Who passes?" they are
dumb;
We cannot see them go or come,
Their touches fall soft, cold, as snow
Upon a blind man's face.

VIII.

Yet, touching so, they draw above
Our common thoughts to heaven's
unknown,
Our daily joy and pain advance
To a divine significance,
Our human love—O mortal love,
That light is not its own!

IX.

And sometimes horror chills our
blood
To be so near such mystic things,
And we wrap round us for defence
Our purple manners, moods of sense,
As angels from the face of God
Stand hidden in their wings.

X.

And sometimes through life's heavy
swound
We grope for them, with strangled
breath
We stretch our hands abroad, and try
To reach them in our agony,
And widen so the broad life-wound
Soon large enough for death.

A CHILD'S THOUGHT OF GOD.

I.

THEY say that God lives very high;
But, if you look above the pines,
You cannot see our God; and why?

II.

And, if you dig down in the mines,
You never see him in the gold;
Though from him all that's glory
shines.

III.

God is so good he wears a fold
Of heaven and earth across his face,
Like secrets kept for love, untold.

IV.

But still I feel that his embrace
Slides down by thrills through all
things made,—
Through sight and sound of every
place.

V.

As if my tender mother laid
On my shut lips her kisses' pres-
sure,
Half waking me at night, and said
“Who kissed you through the dark,
dear guesser?”

THE CLAIM.

I.

GRIEF sate upon a rock and sighed
one day,
(Sighing is all her rest)
“Well-away, well-away, ah well-
away!”
As ocean beat the stone, did she her
breast,
“Ah well-away! ah me! alas, ah
me!”
Such sighing uttered she.

II.

A cloud spake out of heaven, as soft
as rain
That falls on water: “Lo,
The winds have wandered from me!
I remain
Alone in the sky-waste, and cannot
go
To lean my whiteness on the moun-
tain blue
Till wanted for more dew.

III.

“The sun has struck my brain to
weary peace,
Whereby constrained and pale
I spin for him a larger golden fleece
Than Jason's, yearning for as full a
sail.
Sweet Grief, when thou hast sighed
to thy mind,
Give me a sigh for wind,

IV.

And let it carry me adown the west.”
But Love, who prostrated
Lay at Grief's foot, his lifted eyes
possessed
Of her full image, answered in her
stead;
“Now nay, now nay! she shall not
give away
What is my wealth, for any Cloud
that flieth:
Where Grief makes moan,
Love claims his own,
And therefore do I lie here night and
day,
And eke my life out with the breath
she sigheth.”

SONG OF THE ROSE.

ATTRIBUTED TO SAPPHO.

(From Achilles Tatius.)

If Zeus chose us a king of the flow-
ers in his mirth,
He would call to the rose, and would
royally crown it,

For the rose, ho, the rose ! is the grace of the earth,
Is the light of the plants that are growing upon it:
For the rose, ho, the rose ! is the eye of the flowers,
Is the blush of the meadows that feel themselves fair,
Is the lightning of beauty that strikes through the bowers
On pale lovers who sit in the glow unaware.
Ho, the rose breathes of love ! ho, the rose lifts the cup
To the red lips of Cypris invoked for a guest !
Ho, the rose, having curled its sweet leaves for the world,
Takes delight in the motion its petals keep up,
As they laugh to the wind as it laughs from the west !

A DEAD ROSE.

I.
O ROSE, who dares to name thee ?
No longer roseate now, nor soft nor sweet,
But pale and hard and dry as stubble wheat,
Kept seven years in a drawer, thy titles shame thee.

II.
The breeze that used to blow thee
Between the hedgerow thorns, and take away
An odor up the lane to last all day,
If breathing now, unsweetened would forego thee.

III.
The sun that used to smite thee,
And mix his glory in thy gorgeous urn,
Till beam appeared to bloom, and flower to burn,
If shining now, with not a hue would light thee.

IV.
The dew that used to wet thee,
And, white first, grow incarnadined because
It lay upon thee where the crimson was,
If dropping now, would darken where it met thee

V.
The fly that lit upon thee
To stretch the tendrils of its tiny feet
Along thy leaf's pure edges after heat,
If lighting now, would coldly overrun thee.

VI.
The bee that once did suck thee,
And build thy perfumed ambers up his hive,
And swoon in thee for joy, till scarce alive,
If passing now, would blindly overlook thee.

VII.
The heart doth recognize thee,
Alone, alone ! the heart doth smell thee sweet,
Doth view thee fair, doth judge thee most complete,
Perceiving all those changes that disguise thee.

VIII.
Yes, and the heart doth owe thee
More love, dead rose, than to any roses bold
Which Julia wears at dances, smiling cold;
Lie still upon this heart which breaks below thee.

THE EXILE'S RETURN.

I.
WHEN from thee, weeping, I removed,
And from my land for years,
I thought not to return, beloved,
With those same parting tears.
I come again to hill and lea
Weeping for thee.

II.

I clasped thine hand when standing last
Upon the shore in sight.
The land is green, the ship is fast,
I shall be there to-night.
I shall be there — no longer we —
No more with thee!

III.

Had I beheld thee dead and still,
I might more clearly know
How heart of thine could turn as chill
As hearts by nature so;
How change could touch the false-hood-free
And changeless thee.

IV.

But now thy fervid looks last seen
Within my soul remain:
'Tis hard to think that *they* have been,
To be no more again;
That I shall vainly wait, ah me!
A word from thee.

V.

I could not bear to look upon
That mound of funeral clay
Where one sweet voice is silence, one
Ethereal brow, decay;
Where all thy mortal I may see,
But never thee.

VI.

For thou art where all friends are gone
Whose parting pain is o'er;
And I, who love and weep alone,
Where thou wilt weep no more,
Weep bitterly and selfishly
For me, not thee.

VII.

I know, beloved, thou canst not know
That I endure this pain;
For saints in heaven, the Scriptures show,
Can never grieve again:
And grief known mine, even there,
would be
Still shared by thee.

THE SLEEP.

"He giveth His beloved sleep." — *Ps. cxvii. 2*

I.

Of all the thoughts of God that are
Borne inward into souls afar
Along the Psalmist's music deep,
Now tell me if that any is,
For gift or grace, surpassing this,—
"He giveth His beloved sleep."

II.

What would we give to our beloved?
The hero's heart to be unmoved,
The poet's star-tuned harp to sweep,
The patriot's voice to teach and rouse,
The monarch's crown to light the brows? —

He giveth His beloved sleep.

III.

What do we give to our beloved?
A little faith all undisproved,
A little dust to overweep,
And bitter memories to make
The whole earth blasted for our sake:
He giveth His beloved sleep.

IV.

"Sleep soft, beloved!" we sometimes say,
Who have no tune to charm away
Sad dreams that through the eyelids creep;
But never doleful dream again
Shall break the happy slumber when
He giveth His beloved sleep.

V.

O earth, so full of dreary noises!
O men with wailing in your voices!
O delved gold the wailers heap!
O strife, O curse, that o'er it fall!
God strikes a silence through you all,
And giveth His beloved sleep.

VI.

His dews drop mutely on the hill,
His cloud above it saileth still,
Though on its slope men sow and reap:
More softly than the dew is shed,
Or cloud is floated overhead,
He giveth His beloved sleep.

VII.

Ay, men may wonder while they scan
A living, thinking, feeling man;
Confirmd in such a rest to keep;
But angels say, and through the word
I think their happy smile is heard,
"He giveth His beloved sleep."

VIII.

For me, my heart that erst did go
Most like a tired child at a show,
That sees through tears the mum-
mers leap,
Would now its wearied vision close,
Would childlike on His love repose
Who giveth His beloved sleep.

IX.

And friends, dear friends, when it
shall be
That this low breath is gone from me,
And round my bier ye come to weep,
Let one most loving of you all,
Say, "Not a tear must o'er her fall !
He giveth His beloved sleep."

Say, "No more tears, Lord God !
The measure runneth o'er" ?

III.

O Holder of the balance, laughest
thou ?
Nay, Lord ! be gentler to our foolish-
ness,
For his sake who assumed our dust,
and turns
On thee pathetic eyes
Still moistened with our tears.

IV.

And teach us, O our Father, while we
weep,
To look in patience upon earth, and
learn —
Waiting, in that meek gesture, till at
last
These tearful eyes be filled
With the dry dust of death.

COWPER'S GRAVE.

THE MEASURE.

"He comprehended the dust of the earth in a
measure (*וְלֹשׁ*)."¹ — Isa. xl.

"Thou givest them tears to drink in a measure
(*וְלֹשׁ*)."¹ — Ps. lxxx.

I.

God the Creator, with a pulseless
hand
Of unoriginated power, hath weighed
The dust of earth and tears of man in
one
Measure, and by one weight:
So saith his holy book.

II.

Shall we, then, who have issued from
the dust,
And there return — shall we who toil
for dust
And wrap our winnings in this dusty
life,

¹ I believe that the word occurs in no other part of the Hebrew Scriptures.

I.
It is a place where poets crowned
may feel the heart's decaying;
It is a place where happy saints may
weep amid their praying:
Yet let the grief and humbleness as
low as silence languish:
Earth surely now may give her calm
to whom she gave her anguish.

II.

O poets, from a maniac's tongue was
poured the deathless singing !
O Christians, at your cross of hope a
hopeless hand was clinging !
O men, this man in brotherhood your
weary paths beguiling,
Groaned only while he taught you
peace, and died while ye were
smiling !

III.

And now, what time ye all may read
through dimming tears his story,
How discord on the music fell, and
darkness on the glory,

And how when, one by one, sweet sounds and wandering lights departed,
He wore no less a loving face because so broken-hearted,

IV.

He shall be strong to sanctify the poet's high vocation,
And bow the meekest Christian down in meeker adoration;
Nor ever shall he be, in praise, by wise or good forsaken,
Named softly as the household name of one whom God hath taken.

V.

With quiet sadness and no gloom I learn to think upon him,
With meekness that is gratefulness to God whose heaven hath won him,
Who suffered once the madness-cloud to His own love to blind him;
But gently led the blind along where breath and bird could find him,

VI.

And wrought within his shattered brain such quick poetic senses As hills have language for, and stars, harmonious influences:
The pulse of dew upon the grass kept his within its number,
And silent shadows from the trees refreshed him like a slumber.

VII.

Wild, timid hares were drawn from woods to share his home-caresses,
Uplooking to his human eyes with sylvan tendernesses:
The very world, by God's constraint, from falsehood's ways removing,
Its women and its men became, beside him, true and loving.

VIII.

And though, in blindness, he remained unconscious of that guiding,
And things provided came without the sweet sense of providing,

He testified this solemn truth, while frenzy desolated,
— Nor man nor nature satisfies whom only God created.

IX.

Like a sick child that knoweth not his mother while she blesses, And drops upon his burning brow the coolness of her kisses; That turns his fevered eyes around — “My mother! where's my mother?” As if such tender words and deeds could come from any other! —

X.

The fever gone, with leaps of heart he sees her bending o'er him, Her face all pale from watchful love, — the unwearied love she bore him! — Thus woke the poet from the dream his life's long fever gave him, Beneath those deep pathetic Eyes which closed in death to save him.

XI.

Thus? oh, not thus! no type of earth can image that awaking Wherein he scarcely heard the chant of seraphs round him breaking, Or felt the new immortal throb of soul from body parted, But felt those eyes alone, and knew, — “My Saviour! not deserted!”

XII.

Deserted! Who hath dreamt, that when the cross in darkness rested, Upon the Victim's hidden face no love was manifested? What frantic hands outstretched have e'er the atoning drops averted? What tears have washed them from the soul, that one should be deserted?

XIII.

Deserted! God could separate from his own essence rather; And Adam's sins have swept between the righteous Son and Father:

Yea, once Immanuel's orphaned cry
his universe hath shaken —
It went up single, echoless, "My
God, I am forsaken!"

XIV.

It went up from the Holy's lips amid
his lost creation,
That of the lost no son should use
those words of desolation;
That earth's worst frenzies, marring
hope, should mar not hope's
fruition;
And I, on Cowper's grave, should see
his rapture in a vision.

THE WEAKEST THING.

I.

Which is the weakest thing of all
Mine heart can ponder?
The sun a little cloud can pall
With darkness yonder?
The cloud a little wind can move
Where'er it listeth?
The wind a little leaf above,
Though scar, resisteth?

II.

What time that yellow leaf was green
My days were gladder;
But now, whatever spring may mean,
I must grow sadder.
Ah me! a leaf with sighs can wring
My lips asunder?
Then is mine heart the weakest thing
Itself can ponder.

III.

Yet, heart, when sun and cloud are
pined
And drop together,
And, at a blast which is not wind,
The forests wither,
Thou, from the darkening deathly
curse,
To glory breakest,—
The strongest of the universe
Guarding the weakest!

THE PET NAME.

"The name
Which from their lips seemed a caress."
MISS MITFORD'S DRAMATIC SCENES.

I.

I HAVE a name, a little name,
Uncadenced for the ear,
Unhonored by ancestral claim,
Unsanctified by prayer and psalm
The solemn font anear.

II.

It never did to page, wove
For gay romance belong;
It never dedicate did move
As "Sacharissa" unto love,
"Orinda," unto song.

III.

Though I write books, it will be read
Upon the leaves of none;
And afterward, when I am dead,
Will ne'er be graved, for sight or
tread,
Across my funeral-stone.

IV.

This name, whoever chance to call,
Perhaps your smile may win:
Nay, do not smile! mine eyelids fall
Over mine eyes, and feel withal
The sudden tears within.

V.

Is there a leaf that greenly grows
Where summer meadows bloom,
But gathereth the winter snows,
And changeth to the hue of those,
If lasting till they come?

VI.

Is there a word, or jest, or game,
But time incrusted round
With sad associate thought the same?
And so to me my very name
Assumes a mournful sound.

VII.

My brother gave that name to me
When we were children twain,
When names acquired baptismally
Were hard to utter, as to see
That life had any pain.

VIII.

No shade was on us then, save one
Of chestnuts from the hill;
And through the word our laugh did
run
As part thereof: the mirth being
done,
He calls me by it still.

IX.

Nay, do not smile! I hear in it
What none of you can hear,—
The talk upon the willow seat,
The bird and wind that did repeat
Around our human cheer.

X.

I hear the birthday's noisy bliss.
My sisters' woodland glee;
My father's praise I did not miss,
When, stooping down, he cared to kiss
The poet at his knee,—

XI.

And voices which, to name me, aye
Their tenderest tones were keep-
ing—
To some I never more can say
An answer till God wipes away
In heaven these drops of weeping.

XII.

My name to me a sadness wears;
No murmurs cross my mind—
Now God be thanked for these thick
tears
Which show, of those departed years,
Sweet memories left behind.

XIII.

Now God be thanked for years in-
wrought
With love which softens yet;
Now God be thanked for every
thought
Which is so tender it has caught
Earth's guerdon of regret.

XIV.

Earth saddens, never shall remove
Affections purely given;
And e'en that mortal grief shall prove
The immortality of love,
And heighten it with heaven.

THE MOURNING MOTHER.

(OF THE DEAD BLIND.)

I.

Dost thou weep, mourning mother,
For thy blind boy in grave?
That no more with each other,
Sweet counsel ye can have?
That he, left dark by nature,
Can never more be led
By thee, maternal creature,
Along smooth paths instead?
That thou canst no more show him
The sunshine, by the heat;
The river's silver flowing,
By murmurs at his feet?
The foliage, by its coolness;
The roses, by their smell;
And all creation's fulness,
By Love's invisible?
Weepest thou to behold not
His meek blind eyes again,—
Closed doorway which were folded,
And prayed against in vain,
And under which sate smiling
The child-mouth evermore,
As one who watcheth, willing
The time by, at a door?
And weepest thou to feel not
His clinging hand on thine,
Which now, at dream-time, will not
Its cold touch disintwine?
And weepest thou still after,
Oh, never more to mark
His low soft words, made softer
By speaking in the dark?
Weep on, thou mourning mother!

II.

But since to him, when living,
Thou wast both sun and moon,
Look o'er his grave, surviving,
From a high sphere alone:
Sustain that exaltation,
Expand that tender light,
And hold in mother-passion
Thy blessed in thy sight.
See how he went out straightway
From the dark world he knew—
No twilight in the gateway
To mediate 'twixt the two—
Into the sudden glory,
Out of the dark he trod,
Departing from before thee
At once to light and God!

For the first face, beholding
The Christ's in its divine,
For the first place, the golden
And tideless hyaline,
With trees at lasting summer
That rock to songful sound,
While angels the new-comer
Wrap a still smile around.
Oh, in the blessed psalm now,
His happy voice he tries,
Spreading a thicker palm-boough
Than others o'er his eyes !
Yet still, in all the singing,
Thinks haply of thy song,
Which, in his life's first springing,
Sang to him all night long;
And wishes it beside him,
With kissing lips that cool
And soft did overglide him,
To make the sweetness full.
Look up, O mourning mother !
Thy blind boy walks in light:
Ye wait for one another
Before God's infinite.
But thou art now the darkest,
Thou mother left below;
Thou, the sole blind,—thou mark-
est,
Content that it be so,—
Until ye two have meeting
Where heaven's pearl-gate is,
And he shall lead thy feet in,
As once thou leddest his.
Wait on, thou mourning mother !

A VALEDICTION.

I.

God be with thee, my beloved — God
be with thee !
Else alone thou goest forth,
Thy face unto the north,
Moor and pleasance all around thee
and beneath thee
Looking equal in one snow;
While I, who try to reach thee,
Vainly follow, vainly follow,
With the farewell and the hollo,

And cannot reach thee so.
Alas, I can but teach thee !
God be with thee, my beloved — God
be with thee !

II.

Can I teach thee, my beloved — can
I teach thee ?
If I said, "Go left or right."
The counsel would be light,
The wisdom poor of all that could en-
rich thee;
My right would show like left;
My raising would depress thee,
My choice of light would blind thee,
Of way, would leave behind thee,
Of end, would leave bereft.
Alas, I can but bless thee !
May God teach thee, my beloved —
may God teach thee !

III.

Can I bless thee, my beloved — can I
bless thee ?
What blessing word can I
From mine own tears keep dry ?
What flowers grow in my field where-
with to dress thee ?
My good reverts to ill;
My calmesses would move thee,
My softnesses would prick thee,
My bindings up would break thee,
My crownings, curse and kill.
Alas, I can but love thee !
May God bless thee, my beloved —
may God bless thee !

IV.

Can I love thee, my beloved — can I
love thee ?
And is *this* like love, to stand
With no help in my hand,
When strong as death I fain would
watch above thee ?
My love-kiss can deny
No tear that falls beneath it;
Mine oath of love can swear thee
From no ill that comes near thee,
And thou diest while I breathe it,
And I — I can but die !
May God love thee, my beloved —
may God love thee !

LESSONS FROM THE GORSE.

"To win the secret of a weed's plain heart." LOWELL.

I.

MOUNTAIN gorses, ever golden,
Cankered not the whole year long,
Do ye teach us to be strong,
Howsoever pricked and holden,
Like your thorny blooms, and so
Trodden on by rain and snow,
Up the hillside of this life, as bleak
as where ye grow ?

II.

Mountain blossoms, shining blossoms,
Do ye teach us to be glad
When no summer can be had,
Blooming in our inward bosoms ? —
Ye whom God preserveth still,
Set as lights upon a hill,
Tokens to the wintry earth that beauty liveth still.

III.

Mountain gorses, do ye teach us
From that academic chair
Canopied with azure air,
That the wisest word man reaches
Is the humblest he can speak ? —
Ye who live on mountain peak,
Yet live low along the ground, beside the grasses meek.

IV.

Mountain gorses, since Linnaeus
Knelt beside you on the sod,
For your beauty thanking God,
For your teaching, ye should see us
Bowing in prostration now !
Whence arisen, if one or two
Drops be on our cheeks, O world,
they are not tears, but dew.

THE LADY'S YES.

I.

"Yes," I answered you last night;
"No," this morning, sir, I say:
Colors seen by candle-light
Will not look the same by day.

II.

When the viols played their best,
Lamps above, and laughs below,
Lore me sounded like a jest,
Fit for yes, or fit for no.

III.

Call me false, or call me free,
Vow, whatever light may shine,
No man on your face shall see
Any grief for change on mine.

IV.

Yet the sin is on us both;
Time to dance is not to woo:
Wooring light makes fickle troth,
Scorn of *me* recoils on *you*.

V.

Learn to win a lady's faith
Nobly, as the thing is high,
Bravely, as for life and death,
With a loyal gravity.

VI.

Lead her from the festive boards,
Point her to the starry skies;
Guard her by your truthful words
Pure from courtship's flatteries.

VII.

By your truth she shall be true,
Ever true, as wives of yore;
And her yes once said to you
SHALL be yes forevermore.

A WOMAN'S SHORTCOMINGS.

I.

Sue has laughed as softly as if she sighed,
She has counted six and over,
Of a purse well filled, and a heart well tried —
Oh each a worthy lover !
They "give her time;" for her soul must slip
Where the world has set the grooving;
She will lie to none with her fair red lip —
But love seeks truer loving.

II.

She trembles her fan in a sweetness dumb,
As her thoughts were beyond recalling,
With a glance for one, and a glance for some,
From her eyelids rising and falling;
Speaks common words with a blushing air,
Hears bold words, unrepenting;
But her silence says — what she never will swear —
And love seeks better loving.

III.

Go, lady, lean to the night-guitar,
And drop a smile to the bringer.
Then smile as sweetly, when he is far,
At the voice of an indoor singer.
Bask tenderly beneath tender eyes;
Glance lightly on their removing;
And join new vows to old perjuries —
But dare not call it loving.

IV.

Unless you can think, when the song is done,
No other is soft in the rhythm;
Unless you can feel, when left by one,
That all men else go with him;
Unless you can know, when unpraised
by his breath,
That your beauty itself wants provoking;
Unless you can swear, "For life, for death!" —
Oh fear to call it loving!

V.

Unless you can muse in a crowd all day,
On the absent face that fixed you;
Unless you can love, as the angels may,
With the breadth of heaven betwixt you;
Unless you can dream that his faith is fast,
Through behoving and unbehoving;
Unless you can die when the dream is past —
Oh never call it loving!

A MAN'S REQUIREMENTS.

I.

Love me, sweet, with all thou art,
Feeling, thinking, seeing;
Love me in the lightest part,
Love me in full being.

II.

Love me with thine open youth
In its frank surrender,
With the vowed of thy mouth,
With its silence tender.

III.

Love me with thine azure eyes,
Made for earnest granting;
Taking color from the skies,
Can heaven's truth be wanting ?

IV.

Love me with their lids, that fall
Snow-like at first meeting;
Love me with thine heart, that all
Neighbors then see beating.

V.

Love me with thine hand stretched out
Freely, open minded;
Love me with thy loitering foot,
Hearing one behind it.

VI.

Love me with thy voice, that turns
Sudden faint above me;
Love me with thy blush, that burns
When I murmur, Love me !

VII.

Love me with thy thinking soul,
Break it to love-sighing;
Love me with thy thoughts that roll
On through living — dying.

VIII.

Love me in thy gorgeous airs,
When the world has crowned thee;
Love me, kneeling at thy prayers,
With the angels round thee.

IX.

Love me pure, as musers do,
Up the woodlands shady;
Love me gayly, fast, and true,
As a winsome lady.

X.

Through all hopes that keep us brave,
Farther off or nigher;
Love me for the house and grave —
And for something higher.

XI.

Thus, if thou wilt prove me, dear,
Woman's love no fable,
I will love *thee* — half a year —
As a man is able.

I listened in mine agony —
It was the *silence* made me groan.
And now my spinning is all done.

V.

Bury me 'twixt my mother's grave,
(Who cursed me on her death-bed
lone,) And my dead baby's (God it save!)
Who, not to bless me, would not
moan.
And now my spinning is all done.

VI.

A stone upon my heart and head,
But no name written on the stone;
Sweet neighbors, whisper low instead,
"This sinner was a loving one —
And now her spinning is all done."

VII.

And let the door ajar remain,
In case he should pass by anon;
And leave the wheel out very plain,
That he, when passing in the sun,
May see the spinning is all done.

A YEAR'S SPINNING.

I.

He listened at the porch that day,
To hear the wheel go on and on;
And then it stopped, ran back a way,
While through the door he brought
the sun.
But now my spinning is all done.

II.

He sate beside me, with an oath
That love ne'er ended, once begun:
I smiled, believing for us both
What was the truth for only one.
And now my spinning is all done.

III.

My mother cursed me that I heard
A young man's wooing as I spun:
Thanks, cruel mother, for that word,
For I have since a harder known.
And now my spinning is all done.

IV.

I thought — O God! — my first-born's
cry
Both voices to mine ear would
drown:

CHANGE UPON CHANGE.

I.

FIVE months ago the stream did flow,
The lilies bloomed within the sedge,
And we were lingering to and fro
Where none will track thee in this
snow,
Along the stream, beside the hedge.
Ah, sweet, be free to love and go!
For, if I do not hear thy foot,
The frozen river is as mute,
The flowers have dried down to the
root:
And why, since these be changed
since May,
Shouldst *thou* change less than
they?

II.

And slow, slow as the winter snow,
The tears have drifted to mine
eyes;
And my poor cheeks, five months ago
Set blushing at thy praises so,
Put paleness on for a disguise.
Ah, sweet, be free to praise and go!
For, if my face is turned too pale,
It was thine oath that first did
fail;
It was thy love proved false and
frail:
And why, since these be changed
now,
Should I change less than thou?

THAT DAY.

I.

I STAND by the river where both of us
stood,
And there is but one shadow to darken
the flood;
And the path leading to it, where
both used to pass,
Has the step of but one to take dew
from the grass,—
One forlorn since that day.

II.

The flowers of the margin are many
to see;
None stoops at my bidding to pluck
them for me.
The bird in the alder sings loudly and
long:
My low sound of weeping disturbs
not his song,
As thy vow did that day.

III.

I stand by the river, I think of the
vow;
Oh, calm as the place is, vow-breaker,
be thou!

I leave the flower growing, the bird
unreproved:
Would I trouble *thee* rather than
them, my beloved,—
And my lover that day?

IV.

Go, be sure of my love, by that treason
son forgiven;
Of my prayers, by the blessings they
win thee from heaven;
Of my grief (guess the length of the
sword by the sheath's)
By the silence of life, more pathetic
than death's!
Go,—be clear of that day!

A REED.

I.

I AM no trumpet, but a reed;
No flattering breath shall from me
lead
A silver sound, a hollow sound:
I will not ring, for priest or king,
One blast that in re-echoing
Would leave a bondsman faster
bound.

II.

I am no trumpet, but a reed,—
A broken reed, the wind indeed
Left flat upon a dismal shore,
Yet if a little maid or child
Should sigh within it, earnest-mild
This reed will answer evermore.

III.

I am no trumpet, but a reed;
Go, tell the fishers, as they spread
Their nets along the river's edge,
I will not tear their nets at all,
Nor pierce their hands if they should
fall:
Then let them leave me in the
sedge.

THE DEAD PAN.

Excited by Schiller's "Götter Griechenlands," and partly founded on a well-known tradition mentioned in a treatise of Plutarch ("De Oraculorum Defectu"), according to which, at the hour of the Saviour's agony, a cry of "Great Pan is dead!" swept across the waves in the hearing of certain mariners, — and the oracles ceased.

It is in all veneration to the memory of the deathless Schiller that I oppose a doctrine still more dishonoring to poetry than to Christianity.

As Mr. Kenyon's graceful and harmonious paraphrase of the German poem was the first occasion of the turning of my thoughts in this direction, I take advantage of the pretence to indulge my feelings (which overflow on other grounds) by inscribing my lyric to that dear friend and relative, with the earnestness of appreciating esteem, as well as of affectionate gratitude. 1844.

I.
Gods of Hellas, gods of Hellas,
Can ye listen in your silence?
Can your mystic voices tell us
Where ye hide? In floating islands,
With a wind that evermore
Keeps you out of sight of shore?
Pan, Pan, is dead.

II.
In what revels are ye sunken,
In old Ethiopia?
Have the pygmies made you drunken,
Bathing in mandragora
Your divine pale lips, that shiver
Like the lotus in the river?
Pan, Pan, is dead.

III.
Do ye sit there still in slumber,
In gigantic Alpine rows?
The black poppies out of number,
Nodding, dripping from your brows
To the red lees of your wine,
And so kept alive and fine?
Pan, Pan, is dead.

IV.
Or lie crushed your stagnant corses
Where the silver spheres roll on,
Stung to life by centric forces
Thrown like rays out from the sun?
While the smoke of your old altars
Is the shroud that round you welters?
Great Pan is dead.

V.
"Gods of Hellas, gods of Hellas,"
Said the old Hellenic tongue,
Said the hero-oaths, as well as
Poet's songs the sweetest sung,
Have ye grown deaf in a day?
Can ye speak not yea or nay,
Since Pan is dead?

VI.
Do ye leave your rivers flowing
All alone, O Naiades,
While your drenched locks dry slow
in
This cold, feeble sun and breeze?
Not a word the Naiads say,
Though the rivers run for aye;
For Pan is dead.

VII.
From the gloaming of the oak-wood,
O ye Dryads, could ye flee?
At the rushing thunderstroke would
No sob tremble through the tree?
Not a word the Dryads say,
Though the forests wave for aye;
For Pan is dead.

VIII.
Have ye left the mountain-places,
Oread wild, for other tryst?
Shall we see no sudden faces
Strike a glory through the mist?
Not a sound the silence thrills
Of the everlasting hills:
Pan, Pan, is dead.

IX.
O twelve gods of Plato's vision,
Crowned to starry wanderings,
With your chariots in procession,
And your silver clash of wings!
Very pale ye seem to rise,
Ghosts of Grecian deities,
Now Pan is dead.

X.
Jove, that right hand is unloaded,
Whence the thunder did prevail,
White in idiocy of godhead!
Thou art staring the stars pale!
And thine eagle, blind and old,
Roughs his feathers in the cold.
Pan, Pan, is dead.

XI.

Where, O Juno, is the glory
Of thy regal look and tread?
Will they lay forevermore thee
On thy dim, straight golden bed?
Will thy queendom all lie hid
Meekly under either lid?
Pan, Pan, is dead.

XII.

Ha, Apollo! floats his golden
Hair all mist-like where he stands,
While the Muses hang infolding
Knee and foot with faint, wild hands?
'Neath the clanging of thy bow,
Niobe looked lost as thou!
Pan, Pan, is dead.

XIII.

Shall the casque with its brown iron,
Pallas' broad blue eyes eclipse,
And no hero take inspiring
From the god-Greek of her lips?
'Neath her olive dost thou sit,
Mars the mighty, cursing it?
Pan, Pan, is dead.

XIV.

Bacchus, Bacchus! on the panther
He swoons, bound with his own vines;
And his Maenads slowly saunter,
Head aside, among the pines,
While they murmur dreamingly,
"Evohe—ah—evohe—!"
Ah, Pan is dead!"

XV.

Neptune lies beside the trident,
Dull and senseless as a stone;
And old Pluto, deaf and silent,
Is cast out into the sun;
Ceres smileth stern thereat,
"We all now are desolate,
Now Pan is dead."

XVI.

Aphrodite! dead and driven
As thy native foam, thou art;
With the cestus long done heaving
On the white calm of thine heart.
At Adonis! at that shriek
Not a tear runs down her cheek.
Pan, Pan, is dead.

XVII.

And the Loves, we used to know from
One another, huddled lie,
Frore as taken in a snow-storm,
Close beside her tenderly,
As if each had weakly tried
Once to kiss her as he died.
Pan, Pan, is dead.

XVIII.

What, and Hermes? Time intrall-
eth
All thy cunning, Hermes, thus,
And the ivy blindly crawleth
Round thy brave caduceus?
Hast thou no new message for us,
Full of thunder and Jove-glories?
Nay, Pan is dead.

XIX.

Crowned Cybele's great turret
Rocks and crumbles on her head;
Roar the lions of her chariot
Toward the wilderness, unifed:
Scornful children are not mute, —
"Mother, mother, walk afoot,
Since Pan is dead!"

XX.

In the fiery-hearted centre
Of the solemn universe,
Ancient Vesta, who could enter
To consume thee with this curse?
Drop thy gray chin on thy knee,
O thou palsied Mystery!
For Pan is dead.

XXI.

Gods, we vainly do adjure you,
Ye return nor voice nor sign!
Not a votary could secure you
Even a grave for your Divine, —
Not a grave, to show thereby,
Here these gray old gods do lie.
Pan, Pan, is dead.

XXII.

Even that Greece who took your
wages
Calls the obolus outworn;
And the hoarse deep-throated ages
Laugh your godships unto scorn;
And the poets do disclaim you,
Or grow colder if they name you —
And Pan is dead.

XXIII.

Gods bereaved, gods belated,
With your purples rent asunder,
Gods discrowned and desecrated,
Disinherited of thunder,
Now the goats may climb and crop
The soft grass on Ida's top —
Now Pan is dead.

XXIV.

Calm, of old, the bark went onward,
When a cry more loud than wind,
Rose up, deepened, and swept sun-
ward,
From the piled Dark behind;
And the sun shrank, and grew pale,
Breathed against by the great wail —
“Pan, Pan, is dead.”

XXV.

And the rowers from the benches
Fell, each shuddering on his face,
While departing Influences
Struck a cold back through the place;
And the shadow of the ship
Reeled along the passive deep —
“Pan, Pan, is dead.”

XXVI.

And that dismal cry rose slowly
And sank slowly through the air,
Full of spirit's melancholy
And eternity's despair!
And they heard the words it said —
PAN IS DEAD — GREAT PAN IS DEAD —
PAN, PAN, IS DEAD.

XXVII.

’Twas the hour when One in Sion
Hung for love’s sake on a cross;
When his brow was chill with dying,
And his soul was faint with loss;
When his priestly blood dropped
downward,
And his kingly eyes looked thronew-
ward —

Then Pan was dead.

XXVIII.

By the love he stood alone in,
His sole Godhead rose complete,
And the false gods fell down moan-
ing,

Each from off his golden seat;
All the false gods with a cry
Rendered up their deity —
Pan, Pan, was dead.

XXIX.

Wailing wide across the islands,
They rent, vest-like, their Divine;
And a darkness and a silence
Quenched the light of every shrine;
And Dodona's oak swang lonely,
Henceforth, to the tempest only,
Pan, Pan, was dead.

XXX.

Pythia staggered, feeling o'er her
Her lost god's forsaking look;
Straight her eyeballs filmed with hor-
ror,
And her crispy fillets shook,
And her lips gasped through their
foam,
For a word that did not come.
Pan, Pan, was dead.

XXXI.

O ye vain, false gods of Hellas,
Ye are silent evermore;
And I dash down this old chalice
Whence libations ran of yore.
See, the wine crawls in the dust
Wormlike — as your glories must,
Since Pan is dead.

XXXII.

Get to dust as common mortals,
By a common doom and track!
Let no Schiller from the portals
Of that Hades call you back,
Or instruct us to weep all
At your antique funeral.
Pan, Pan, is dead.

XXXIII.

By your beauty, which confesses
Some chief beauty conquering you;
By our grand heroic guesses
Through your falsehood at the true, —
We will weep not! earth shall roll
Heir to each god's aureole —
And Pan is dead.

XXXIV.

Earth outgrows the mythic fancies
Sung beside her in her youth,
And those debonair romances
Sound but dull beside the truth.
Phœbus' chariot-course is run:
Look up, poets, to the sun!
Pan, Pan, is dead.

XXXV.

Christ hath sent us down the angels,
And the whole earth and the skies
Are illumined by altar-candles
Lit for blessed mysteries,
And a priest's hand through creation
Waveth calm and consecration —
And Pan is dead

XXXVI.

Truth is fair: should we forego it?
Can we sigh right for a wrong?
God himself is the best Poet,
And the real is his song
Sing his truth out fair and full,
And secure his beautiful.
Let Pan be dead.

XXXVII.

Truth is large: our aspiration
Scarce embraces half we be.
Shame, to stand in his creation
And doubt truth's sufficiency!
To think God's song unexcelling
The poor tales of our own telling —
When Pan is dead.

XXXVIII.

What is true and just and honest,
What is lovely, what is pure,
All of praise that hath admonish'd,
All of virtue shall endure, —
These are themes for poets' uses,
Stirring nobler than the Muses,
Ere Pan was dead.

XXXIX.

O brave poets, keep back nothing,
Nor mix falsehood with the whole;
Look up Godward; speak the truth in
Worthy song from earnest soul;
Hold in high poetic duty
Truest truth the fairest beauty!
Pan, Pan, is dead.

A CHILD'S GRAVE AT FLORENCE.

A. A. E. C.

BORN JULY, 1848. DIED NOVEMBER, 1849.

I.

Of English blood, of Tuscan birth,
What country should we give her?
Instead of any on the earth,
The civic heavens receive her.

II

And here among the English tombs,
In Tuscan ground we lay her,
While the blue Tuscan sky endomes
Our English words of prayer.

III.

A little child! how long she lived,
By months, not years, is reckoned:
Born in one July, she survived
Alone to see a second.

IV.

Bright featured, as the July sun
Her little face still played in,
And splendors, with her birth begun,
Had had no time for fading.

V.

So, LILY, from those July hours,
No wonder we should call her:
She looked such kinship to the flowers,
Was but a little taller.

VI.

A Tuscan Lily, — only white,
As Dante, in abhorrence
Of red corruption, wished aright
The lilies of his Florence.

VII.

We could not wish her whiter, — her
Who perfumed with pure blossom
The house, — a lovely thing to wear
Upon a mother's bosom!

VIII.

This July creature thought, perhaps,
Our speech not worth assuming:
She sat upon her parents' laps
And mimicked the gnat's humming;

IX.

Said "father," "mother," then left off,
For tongues celestial fitter:
Her hair had grown just long enough
To catch heaven's jasper-glitter.

X.

Babes! Love could always hear and see
Behind the cloud that hid them:
"Let little children come to me,
And do not thou forbid them."

XI.

So, unforbidding, have we met,
And gently here have laid her,
Though winter is no time to get
The flowers that should o'erspread her.

XII.

We should bring pansies quick with spring,
Rose, violet, daffodilly,
And also, above every thing,
White lilies, for our Lily.

XIII.

Nay, more than flowers, this grave exacts,—
Glad, grateful attestations
Of her sweet eyes and pretty acts,
With calm renunciations.

XIV.

Her very mother with light feet
Should leave the place too earthly,
Saying, "The angels have thee,
sweet,
Because we are not worthy."

XV.

But winter kills the orange-buds,
The gardens in the frost are;
And all the heart dissolves in floods,
Remembering we have lost her.

XVI.

Poor earth, poor heart, too weak, too weak
To miss the July shining!
Poor heart!—what bitter words we speak
When God speaks of resigning!

XVII.

Sustain this heart in us that faints,
Thou God, the self-existent!
We catch up wild at parting saints,
And feel thy heaven too distant.

XVIII.

The wind that swept them out of sin
Has ruffled all our vesture:
On the shut door that let them in
We beat with frantic gesture,—

XIX.

To us, us also, open straight!
The outer life is chilly:
Are we, too, like the earth, to wait
Till next year for our Lily?

XX.

—Oh, my own baby on my knees,
My leaping, dimpled treasure,
At every word I write like these,
Clasped close with stronger pressure!

XXI.

Too well my own heart understands,
At every word beats fuller—
My little feet, my little hands,
And hair of Lily's color!

XXII.

But God gives patience; love learns strength,
And faith remembers promise,
And hope itself can smile at length
On other hopes gone from us.

XXIII.

Love, strong as death, shall conquer death,
Through struggle made more glorious:
This mother stills her sobbing breath,
Renouncing, yet victorious.

XXIV.

Arms empty of her child she lifts
With spirit unbereaven,—
"God will not all take back his gifts:
My Lily's mine in heaven."

xxv.

" Still mine ! maternal rights serene
Not given to another !
The crystal bars shine faint between
The souls of child and mother.

xxvi.

" Meanwhile," the mother cries,
" content !
Our love was well divided:
Its sweetness following where she
went,
Its anguish staid where I did.

xxvii.

" Well done of God, to halve the lot,
And give her all the sweetness;
To us, the empty room and cot;
To her, the heaven's completeness.

xxviii.

" To us, this grave; to her, the rows
The mystic palm-trees spring in;
To us, the silence in the house;
To her, the choral singing.

xxix.

" For her, to gladden in God's view;
For us, to hope and bear on.
Grow, Lily, in thy garden new,
Beside the Rose of Sharon !

xxx.

" Grow fast in heaven, sweet Lily
clipped,
In love more calm than this is,
And may the angels dewy-lipped
Remind thee of our kisses !

xxxI.

" While none shall tell thee of our
tears,—
These human tears now falling,
Till, after a few patient years,
One home shall take us all in.

xxxII.

" Child, father, mother—who left
out ?
Not mother, and not father !
And when, our dying couch about,
The natural mists shall gather,

xxxIII.

" Some smiling angel close shall stand
In old Correggio's fashion,
And bear a Lily in his hand,
For death's ANNUNCIATION."

CATARINA TO CAMOENS;

DYING IN HIS ABSENCE ABROAD, AND RE-FERRING TO THE POEM IN WHICH HE RECORDED THE SWEETNESS OF HER EYES.

I.

On the door you will not enter
I have gazed too long: adieu !
Hope withdraws her peradventure;
Death is near me, and not you.
Come, O lover,
Close and cover
These poor eyes you called, I ween,
" Sweetest eyes were ever seen ! "

II.

When I heard you sing that burden
In my vernal days and bowers,
Other praises disregarding,
I but hearkened that of yours,
Only saying
In heart-playing,
" Blessed eyes mine eyes have seen,
If the sweetest IIS have seen ! "

III.

But all changes. At this vesper
Cold the sun shines down the door.
If you stood there, would you whisper,
" Love, I love you," as before,
Death pervading
Now, and shading
Eyes you sang of, that yestreen,
As the sweetest ever seen ?

IV.

Yes. I think, were you beside them,
Near the bed I die upon,
Though their beauty you denied them,
As you stood there, looking down,
You would truly
Call them duly,
For the love's sake found therein,
" Sweetest eyes were ever seen."

V.

And if you looked down upon them,
And if they looked up to you,
All the light which has foregone them
Would be gathered back anew:
They would truly
Be as duly
Love-transformed to beauty's sheen,
" Sweetest eyes were ever seen."

VI.

But, ah me ! you only see me,
In your thoughts of loving man,
Smiling soft, perhaps, and dreamy,
Through the wavings of my fan;
And unweeting
Go repeating
In your reverie screen,
“Sweetest eyes were ever seen.”

VII.

While my spirit leans and reaches
From my body still and pale,
Fain to hear what tender speech is
In your love to help my bale.
O my poet,
Come and show it !
Come, of latest love, to glean,
“Sweetest eyes were ever seen.”

VIII.

O my poet, O my prophet !
When you praised their sweetness
so,
Did you think, in singing of it,
That it might be near to go ?
Had you fancies
From their glances,
That the grave would quickly screen
“Sweetest eyes were ever seen” ?

IX.

No reply. The fountain’s warble
In the courtyard sounds alone.
As the water to the marble
So my heart falls with a moan
From love-sighing
To this dying.
Death forerunneth Love to win
“Sweetest eyes were ever seen.”

X.

Will you come ? When I’m departed
Where all sweetesses are hid,
Where thy voice, my tender-hearted,
Will not lift up either lid,
Cry, O lover,
Love is over !
Cry, beneath the cypress green,
“Sweetest eyes were ever seen !”

XI.

When the angelus is ringing,
Near the convent will you walk,
And recall the choral singing,
Which brought angels down our
talk ?

Spirit-shriven

I viewed heaven,
Till you smiled — “ Is earth unclean,
Sweetest eyes were ever seen ? ”

XII.

When beneath the palace-lattice
You ride slow as you have done,
And you see a face there that is
Not the old familiar one,
Will you oftly
Murmur softly,
“ Here ye watched me morn and e’en,
Sweetest eyes were ever seen ? ”

XIII.

When the palace-ladies, sitting
Round your gittern, shall have said,
“ Poet, sing those verses written
For the lady who is dead,”
Will you tremble,
Yet dissemble,
Or sing hoarse, with tears between,
“ Sweetest eyes were ever seen ? ”

XIV.

“ Sweetest eyes ! ” How sweet in
flowings
The repeated cadence is !
Though you sang a hundred poems,
Still the best one would be this.
I can hear it
Twixt my spirit
And the earth-noise intervene,—
“ Sweetest eyes were ever seen ! ”

XV.

But the priest waits for the praying,
And the choir are on their knees,
And the soul must pass away in
Strains more solemn-high than
these.
Miserere
For the weary !
Oh, no longer for Catrine
“ Sweetest eyes were ever seen ! ”

XVI.

Keep my riband, take and keep it,
(I have loosed it from my hair)¹
Feeling, while you overweep it,
Not alone in your despair,
Since with saintly
Watch unfaintly,
Out of heaven shall o’er you lean
“ Sweetest eyes were ever seen.”

¹ She left him the riband from her hair.

XVII.

But — but now — yet unremovèd
Up to heaven they glisten fast;
You may cast away, belovèd,
In your future all my past:
Such old phrases
May be praises
For some fairer bosom-queen —
“Sweetest eyes were ever seen!”

XVIII.

Eyes of mine, what are ye doing?
Faithless, faithless, praised amiss
If a tear be of your showing,
Dropt for any hope of HIS?
Death has boldness
Besides coldness
If unworthy tears demean
“Sweetest eyes were ever seen.”

XIX.

I will look out to his future;
I will bless it till it shine.
Should he ever be a suitor
Unto sweeter eyes than mine,
Sunshine gild them;
Angels shield them,
Whatsoever eyes terrene
Be the sweetest IIS have seen.

LIFE AND LOVE.

I.

FAST this Life of mine was dying,
Blind already, and calm as death,
Snowflakes on her bosom lying
Scarcely heaving with her breath.

II.

Love came by, and having known her
In a dream of fabled lands,
Gently stooped, and laid upon her
Mystic chrism of holy hands;

III.

Drew his smile across her folded
Eyelids, as the swallow dips;
Breathed as finely as the cold did,
Through the locking of her lips.

IV.

So, when Life looked upward, being
Warmed and breathed on from
above,
What sight could she have for seeing,
Evermore . . . but only Love?

A DENIAL.

I.

We have met late — it is too late to
meet,
O friend, not more than friend!
Death's forecome shroud is tangled
round my feet,
And if I step or stir, I touch the end.
In this last jeopardy
Can I approach thee, I, who cannot
move?
How shall I answer thy request for
love?
Look in my face, and see.

II.

I love thee not, I dare not love thee!
go
In silence; drop my hand.
If thou seek roses, seek them where
they blow
In garden-alleys, not in desert sand.
Can life and death agree,
That thou shouldst stoop thy song to
my complaint?
I cannot love thee. If the word is
faint,
Look in my face, and see.

III.

I might have loved thee in some for-
mer days.
Oh, then my spirits had leapt
As now they sink, at hearing thy love-
praise!
Before these faded cheeks were over-
wept,
Had this been asked of me,
To love thee with my whole strong
heart and head,
I should have said still . . . yes, but
smiled and said,
“Look in my face, and see!”

IV.

But now . . . God sees me,—God,
who took my heart,
And drowned it in life's surge.
In all your wide, warm earth I have
no part—
A light song overcomes me like a
dirge.
Could Love's great harmony
The saints keep step to when their
bonds are loose,
Not weigh me down? am I a wife to
choose?
Look in my face, and see—

V.

While I behold, as plain as one who
dreams,
Some woman of full worth,
Whose voice, as cadenced as a silver
stream's,
Shall prove the fountain-soul which
sends it forth;
One younger, more thought-free
And fair and gay, than I, thou must
forget,
With brighter eyes than these . . .
which are not wet . . .
Look in my face, and see.

VI.

So farewell, thou whom I have known
too late
To let thee come so near.
Be counted happy, while men call
thee great,
And one beloved woman feels thee
dear!—
Not I! —that cannot be.
I am lost, I am changed: I must go
farther, where
The change shall take me worse, and
no one dare
Look in my face, and see.

VII.

Meantime I bless thee. By these
thoughts of mine
I bless thee from all such!
I bless thy lamp to oil, thy cup to
wine,
Thy hearth to joy, thy hand to an
equal touch
Of loyal troth. For me,
I love thee not, I love thee not! —
away!
Here's no more courage in my soul
to say,
“Look in my face, and see.”

PROOF AND DISPROOF.

I.

Dost thou love me, my beloved?
Who shall answer yes or no?
What is proved or disproved
When my soul inquireth so,
Dost thou love me, my beloved?

II.

I have seen thy heart to-day,
Never open to the crowd,
While to love me aye and aye
Was the vow as it was vowed
By thine eyes of steadfast gray.

III.

Now I sit alone, alone—
And the hot tears break and burn
Now, beloved, thou art gone,
Doubt and terror have their turn.
Is it love that I have known.

IV.

I have known some bitter things,—
Anguish, anger, solitude.
Year by year an evil brings,
Year by year denies a good;
March winds violate my springs.

V.

I have known how sickness bends,
I have known how sorrow breaks;
How quick hopes have sudden ends,
How the heart thinks till it aches
Of the smile of buried friends.

VI.

Last, I have known *thee*, my brave
Noble thinker, lover, doer!
The best knowledge last I have;
But thou comest as the thrower
Of fresh flowers upon a grave.

VII.

Count what feelings used to move me!
Can this love assort with those?
Thou, who art so far above me,
Wilt thou stoop so for repose?
Is it true that thou canst love me?

VIII.

Do not blame me if I doubt thee.
I can call love by its name
When thine arm is wrapt about me;
But even love seems not the same
When I sit alone without thee.

IX.

In thy clear eyes I descried
Many a proof of love to-day;
But to-night, those unbelied
Speechful eyes being gone away
There's the proof to seek beside.

X.

Dost thou love me, my beloved ?
Only *thou* canst answer yes !
And, thou gone, the proof's disproved,
And the cry rings answerless, —
Dost thou love me, my beloved ?

QUESTION AND ANSWER.

I.

Love you seek for presupposes
Summer heat and sunny glow.
Tell me, do you find moss-roses
Budding, blooming, in the snow ?
Snow might kill the rose-tree's root:
Shake it quickly from your foot,
Lest it harm you as you go.

II.

From the ivy, where it dapples
A gray ruin, stone by stone,
Do you look for grapes or apples,
Or for sad green leaves alone ?
Pluck the leaves off, two or three;
Keep them for morality
When you shall be safe and gone.

INCLUSIONS.

I.

On, wilt thou have my hand, dear, to
lie along in thine ?
As a little stone in a running stream,
it seems to lie and pine.
Now drop the poor, pale hand, dear,
unfit to plight with thine.

II.

Oh, wilt thou have my cheek, dear,
drawn closer to thine own ?
My cheek is white, my cheek is worn
by many a tear run down.
Now leave a little space, dear, lest it
should wet thine own.

III.

Oh, must thou have my soul, dear,
commingled with thy soul ?
Red grows the cheek, and warm the
hand; the part is in the whole;
Nor hands nor cheeks keep separate,
when soul is joined to soul.

INSUFFICIENCY.

I.

THERE is no one beside thee, and no
one above thee;
Thou standest alone, as the nightin-
gale sings !
And my words that would praise
thee are impotent things,
For none can express thee, though all
should approve thee.
I love thee so, dear, that I only can
love thee.

II.

Say, what can I do for thee ? Weary
thee, grieve thee ?
Lean on thy shoulder, new burdens
to add ?
Weep my tears over thee, making
thee sad ?
Oh, hold me not, love me not ! let me
retrieve thee.
I love thee so, dear, that I only can
leave thee.

SONNETS FROM THE PORTUGUESE.

I.
I THOUGHT once how Theocritus had sung
Of the sweet years, the dear and wished-for years,
Who each one in a gracious hand appears
To bear a gift for mortals, old or young;
And, as I mused it in his antique tongue,
I saw in gradual vision, through my tears,
The sweet, sad years, the melancholy years,
Those of my own life, who by turns had flung
A shadow across me. Straightway I was 'ware,
So weeping, how a mystic shape did move
Behind me, and drew me backward by the hair;
And a voice said in mastery, while I strove,
“Guess now who holds thee?” —
“Death,” I said. But there
The silver answer rang, “Not Death, but Love.”

II.

BUT only three in all God's universe
Have heard this word thou hast said,
—Himself, beside
Thee speaking, and me listening! and replied
One of us . . . that was God . . . and laid the curse
So darkly on my eyelids as to amerce
My sight from seeing thee,—that if I had died,
The death-weights placed there would have signified
Less absolute exclusion. “Nay,” is worse
From God than from all others, O my friend!
Men could not part us with their worldly jars,
Nor the seas change us, nor the tempests bend;
Our hands would touch for all the mountain-bars:

And, heaven being rolled between us at the end,
We should but vow the faster for the stars.

III.

UNLIKE are we, unlike, O princely Heart!
Unlike our uses and our destinies.
Our ministering two angels look surprise
On one another as they strike athwart
Their wings in passing. Thou, before
I think thee, art
A guest for queens to social pageantries,
Wth gages from a hundred brighter eyes
Than tears even can make mine, to play thy part
Of chief musician. What hast thou to do
With looking from the lattice-lights at me,
A poor, tired, wandering singer, singing through
The dark, and leaning up a cypress-tree?
The chrism is on thine head; on mine the dew:
And Death must dig the level where these agree.

IV.

THOU hast thy calling to some pale
ace-floor,
Most gracious singer of high poems, where
The dancers will break footing, from the care
Of watching up thy pregnant lips for more.
And dost thou lift this house's latch too poor
For hand of thine? and canst thou think, and bear
To let thy music drop here unaware
In folds of golden fulness at my door?
Look up, and see the casement broken in,
The bats and owlets builders in the roof!
My cricket chirps against thy mandolin.
Hush, call no echo up in further proof
Of desolation! there's a voice within
That weeps . . . as thou must sing . . . alone, aloof.

V.

I LIFT my heavy heart up solemnly,
As once Electra her sepulchral urn,
And, looking in thine eyes, I over-
turn
The ashes at thy feet. Behold and
see
What a great heap of grief lay hid in
me,
And how the red wild sparkles dimly
burn
Through the ashen grayness If thy
foot in scorn
Could tread them out to darkness
utterly,
It might be well, perhaps But if, in-
stead,
Thou wait beside me for the wind to
blow
The gray dust up . . . those laurels
on thine head,
O my beloved, will not shield thee so,
That none of all the fires shall scorch
and shred
The hair beneath Stand farther off,
then! Go.

VI.

Go from me Yet I feel that I shall
stand
Henceforward in thy shadow. Never-
more
Alone upon the threshold of my door
Of individual life, I shall command
The uses of my soul, nor lift my hand
Serenely in the sunshine as before,
Without the sense of that which I
forbore, —
Thy touch upon the palm The
widest land
Doom takes to part us leaves thy
heart in mine
With pulses that beat double. What
I do
And what I dream include thee, as
the wine
Must taste of its own grapes. And,
when I sue
God for myself, he hears that name of
thine,
And sees within my eyes the tears of
two.

VII.

THE face of all the world is changed,
I think,
Since first I heard the footsteps of thy
soul
Move still, oh, still, beside me as they
stole

Betwixt me and the dreadful outer
brink
Of obvious death, where I, who
thought to sink,
Was caught up into love, and taught
the whole
Of life in a new rhythin. The cup of
dole
God gave for baptism, I am fain to
drink,
And praise its sweetness, sweet, with
thee anear
The names of country, heaven, are
changed away
For where thou art or shalt be, there
or here;
And this . . . this lute and song . . .
loved yesterday,
(The singing angels know) are only
dear
Because thy name moves right in
what they say

VIII.

WHAT can I give thee back, O liberal
And princely giver, who hast brought
the gold
And purple of thine heart, unstained,
untold,
And laid them on the outside of the
wall
For such as I to take or leave withal,
In unexpected largesse? Am I cold,
Ungrateful, that, for these most mani-
fold
High gifts, I render nothing back at
all?
Not so; not cold, but very poor in-
stead.
Ask God, who knows For frequent
tears have run
The colors from my life, and left so
dead
And pale a stuff, it were not fitly
done
To give the same as pillow to thy
head.
Go farther! let it serve to trample on.

IX.

CAN it be right to give what I can
give?
To let thee sit beneath the fall of
tears
As salt as mine, and hear the sighing
years
Re-sighing on my lips renunciative
Through those infrequent smiles
which fail to live

For all thy adjurations? Oh, my fears,
That this can scarce be right! We are not peers,
So to be lovers, and I own and grieve
That givers of such gifts as mine are must
Be counted with the ungenerous.
Out, alas!
I will not soil thy purple with my dust,
Nor breathe my poison on thy Venice-glass,
Nor give thee any love—which were unjust.
Beloved, I only love thee! let it pass.

x . . .

YET love, mere love, is beautiful indeed,
And worthy of acceptance Fire is bright,
Let temple burn, or flax: an equal light
Leaps in the flame from cedar-plank or weed:
And love is fire. And when I say at need
I love thee . . . mark! . . . I love thee
— in thy sight
I stand transfigured, glorified aight,
With conscience of the new rays that proceed
Out of my face toward thine. There's nothing low
In love, when love the lowest: meanest creatures
Who love God, God accepts while loving so.
And what I *feel*, across the inferior features
Of what I *am*, doth flash itself, and show
How that great work of love enhances Nature's.

xi.

AND therefore, if to love can be desert,
I am not all unworthy. Cheeks as pale
As these you see, and trembling knees that fail
To bear the burden of a heavy heart;
This weary minstrel-life that once was
girt
To climb Aornus, and can scarce avail

To pipe now 'gainst the valley night-ingale
A melancholy music, — why advert' To these things? O beloved, it is plain
I am not of thy worth, nor for thy place!
And yet, because I love thee, I obtain
From that same love this vindicating grace,
To live on still in love, and yet in vain,—
To bless thee, yet renounce thee to thy face.

xii.

INDEED, this very love which is my boast,
And which, when rising up from breast to brow,
Doth crown me with a ruby large snow
To draw men's eyes, and prove the inner cost,—
This love even, all my worth, to the uttermost,
I should not love withal, unless that thou
Hadst set me an example, shown me how,
When first thine earnest eyes with mine were crost,
And love called love. And thus I cannot speak
Of love even, as a good thing of my own;
Thy soul hath snatched up mine all faint and weak,
And placed it by thee on a golden throne,—
And that I love (O soul! we must be meek)
Is by thee only, whom I love alone.

xiii.

AND wilt thou have me fashion into speech
The love I bear thee, finding words enough,
And hold the torch out, while the winds are rough,
Between our faces, to cast light on each?
I drop it at thy feet. I cannot teach
My hand to hold my spirit so far off
From myself—me—that I should bring thee proof

In words of love hid in me out of reach.
 Nay, let the silence of my womanhood
 Command my woman-love to thy belief,
 Seeing that I stand unwon, however wooded,
 And rend the garment of my life, in brief,
 By a most dauntless, voiceless fortitude,
 Lest one touch of this heart convey its grief

xiv.

If thou must love me, let it be for nought
 Except for love's sake only. Do not say
 "I love her for her smile, her look, her way
 Of speaking gently, for a trick of thought
 That falls in well with mine, and certes brought
 A sense of pleasant ease on such a day;"
 For these things in themselves, beloved, may
 Be changed, or change for thee: and love so wrought
 May be unwrought so. Neither love me for
 Thine own dear pity's wiping my cheeks dry:
 A creature might forget to weep, who bore
 Thy comfort long, and lose thy love thereby.
 But love me for love's sake, that evermore
 Thou mayst love on through love's eternity.

xv.

ACCUSE me not, beseech thee, that I wear
 Too calm and sad a face in front of thine;
 For we two look two ways, and cannot shine
 With the same sunlight on our brow and hair.
 On me thou lookest with no doubting care,
 As on a bee shut in a crystalline;

Since sorrow hath shut me safe in love's divine,

And to spread wing, and fly in the outer air,
 Were most impossible failure, if I strove
 To fail so. But I look on thee, on thee,
 Beholding, besides love, the end of love,
 Hearing oblivion beyond memory;
 As one who sits and gazes from above,
 Over the rivers to the bitter sea.

xvi.

AND yet, because thou overcomest so,
 Because thou art more noble, and like a king,
 Thou canst prevail against my fears, and fling
 Thy purple round me, till my heart shall grow
 Too close against thine heart henceforth to know
 How it shook when alone. Why, conquering
 May prove as lordly and complete a thing
 In lifting upward as in crushing low!
 And, as a vanquished soldier yields his sword
 To one who lifts him from the bloody earth,
 Even so, beloved, I at last record,
 Here ends my strife. If thou invite me forth,
 I rise above abasement at the word.
 Make thy love larger to enlarge my worth.

xvii.

My poet, thou canst touch on all the notes
 God set between his After and Before,
 And strike up and strike off the general roar
 Of the rushing worlds a melody that floats
 In a serene air purely. Antidotes
 Of medicated music, answering for Mankind's forlornest uses, thou canst pour
 From thence into their ears. God's will devotes
 Thine to such ends, and mine to wait on thine.
 How, dearest, wilt thou have me for most use?—
 A hope to sing by gladly, or a fine Sad memory, with thy songs to interfuse?

A shade, in which to sing, of palm
or pine?
A grave, on which to rest from sing-
ing? Choose

XVIII.

I NEVER gave a lock of hair away
To a man, dearest, except this to
thee,
Which now upon my fingers thought-
fully
I ring out to the full brown length,
and say
“Take it.” My day of youth went
yesterday.
My hair no longer bounds to my foot’s
glee,
Nor plait I it from rose or myrtle-
tree,
As girls do, any more: it only may
Now shade on two pale cheeks the
mark of tears,
Taught drooping from the head that
hangs aside
Through sorrow’s trick. I thought
the funeral-shears
Would take this first; but love is jus-
tified,—
Take it thou, finding pure, from all
those years,
The kiss my mother left here when
she died.

XIX.

THE soul’s Rialto hath its merchan-
dise:
I barter curl for curl upon that mart,
And from my poet’s forehead to my
heart
Receive this lock, which outweighs ar-
gosies,—
As purply black as erst to Pindar’s
eyes
The dim purpureal tresses gloomed
athwart
The nine white Muse-brows. For this
counterpart, . . .
The bay-crown’s shade, belovèd, I
surmise,
Still lingers on thy curl, it is so
black.
Thus, with a fillet of smooth-kissing
breath,
I tie the shadows safe from gliding
back,
And lay the gift where nothing hin-
dereth;

Here on my heart, as on thy brow, to
lack
No natural heat till mine grows cold
in death.

XX.

BELOVÈD, my belovèd, when I think
That thou wast in the world a year
ago,
What time I sate alone here in the
snow,
And saw no footprint, heard the si-
lence sink
No moment at thy voice, but, link by
link,
Went counting all my chains as if that
so
They never could fall off at any blow
Struck by thy possible hand,—why,
thus I drink
Of life’s great cup of wonder! Won-
derful,
Never to feel thee thrill the day or
night
With personal act or speech, nor
ever e’er
Some prescience of thee with the
blossoms white
Thou sawest growing! Atheists are
as dull,
Who cannot guess God’s presence out
of sight.

XXI.

SAY over again, and yet once over
again,
That thou dost love me. Though the
word repeated
Should seem a “cuckoo-song,” as
thou dost treat it,
Remember, never to the hill or plain,
Valley and wood, without he cuckoo-
strain
Comes the fresh Spring in all her
green completed.
Beloved, I, amid the darkness greeted
By a doubtful spirit-voice, in that
doubt’s pain
Cry, “Speak once more—thou lov-
est!” Who can fear
Too many stars, though each in heav-
en shall roll,
Too many flowers, though each shall
crown the year?
Say thou dost love me, love me, love
me; toll
The silver iterance, only minding,
dear,
To love me also in silence with thy
soul.

XXIII.

WHEN our two souls stand up erect
and strong,
Face to face, silent, drawing nigh and
nigher,
Until the lengthening wings break
into fire
At either curvèd point, what bitter
wrong
Can the earth do to us, that we should
not long
Be here contented? Think. In
mounting higher,
The angels would press on us, and
aspire
To drop some golden orb of perfect
song
Into our deep, dear silence. Let us
stay
Rather on earth, beloved, where the
unfit
Contrarious moods of men recoil
away,
And isolate pure spirits, and permit
A place to stand and love in for a
day,
With darkness and the death-hour
rounding it.

XXIII.

Is it indeed so? If I lay here dead,
Wouldst thou miss any life in losing
mine?
And would the sun for thee more
coldly shine,
Because of grave-damps falling round
my head?
I marvelled, my beloved, when I
read
Thy thought so in the letter. I am
thine—
But . . . so much to thee? Can I
pour thy wine
While my hands tremble? Then my
soul, instead
Of dreams of death, resumes life's
lower range.
Then love me, Love! look on me,
breathe on me!
As brighter ladies do not count it
strange,
For love, to give up acres and de-
gree,
I yield the grave for thy sake, and
exchange
My near sweet view of heaven, for
earth with thee!

XXIV.

LET the world's sharpness, like a
clasping knife,
Shut in upon itself, and do no harm
In this close hand of love, now soft
and warm;
And let us hear no sound of human
strife
After the click of the shutting. Life
to life—
I lean upon thee, dear, without
alarm,
And feel as safe as guarded by a
charm
Against the stab of worldlings, who,
if rife,
Are weak to injure. Very whitely
still
The lilies of our lives may re-assure
Their blossoms from their roots, ac-
cessible
Alone to heavenly dews that drop
not fewer;
Growing straight, out of man's reach,
on the hill.
God only, who made us rich, can
make us poor.

XXV.

A HEAVY heart, beloved, have I
borne
From year to year, until I saw thy
face,
And sorrow after sorrow took the
place
Of all those natural joys as lightly
worn
As the stringed pearls, each lifted in
its turn
By a beating heart at dance-time.
Hopes apace
Were changed to long despairs, till
God's own grace
Could scarcely lift above the world
forlorn
My heavy heart. Then thou didst bid
me bring
And let it drop adown thy calmly
great
Deep being. Fast it sinketh, as a
thing
Which its own nature doth precipi-
tate,
While thine doth close above it, me-
diating
Betwixt the stars and the unac-
counted fate.

XXVI.

I LIVED with visions for my company,
Instead of men and women, years
ago,
And found them gentle mates, nor
thought to know
A sweeter music than they played to
me.
But soon their trailing purple was
not free
Of this world's dust, their lutes did
silent grow,
And I myself grew faint and blind
below
Their vanishing eyes. Then THOU
didst come — to be,
Belovèd, what they seemed. Their
shining fronts,
Their songs, their splendors (better,
yet the same,
As river-water hallowed into fonts,)
Met in thee, and from out thee over-
came
My soul with satisfaction of all
wants,
Because God's gifts put man's best
dreams to shame.

XXVII.

My own beloved, who hast listed
me
From this drear flat of earth where I
was thrown,
And, in betwixt the languid ringlets,
blown
A life-breath, till the forehead hope-
fully
Shines out again, as all the angels
see,
Before thy saving kiss! My own, my
own,
Who camest to me when the world
was gone,
And I, who looked for only God,
found *thee*!
I find thee; I am safe and strong
and glad.
As one who stands in dewless aspho-
del
Looks backward on the tedious time
he had
In the upper-life, so I, with bosom-
swell,
Make witness here, between the good
and bad,
That love, as strong as death, re-
trieves as well.

XXVIII.

My letters! all dead paper, mute and
white!
And yet they seem alive, and quiver-
ing
Against my tremulous hands which
loose the string,
And let them drop down on my knee
to-night.
This said, he wished to have me in
his sight
Once, as a friend; this fixed a day in
spring
To come and touch my hand . . . a
simple thing,
Yet I wept for it; this . . . the pa-
per's light . . .
Said, *Dear, I love thee*; and I sank
and quailed
As if God's future thundered on my
past.
This said, *I am thine*, and so its ink
has paled
With lying at my heart that beat too
fast;
And this . . . O love, thy words have
ill availed
If what this said I dared repeat at
last!

XXIX.

I THINK of thee! — my thoughts do
twine and bud
About thee, as wild vines about a
tree
Put out broad leaves, and soon there's
nought to see
Except the straggling green which
hides the wood.
Yet, O my palm-tree! be it under-
stood
I will not have my thoughts instead
of thee
Who art dearer, better. Rather, in-
stantly
Renew thy presence: as a strong tree
should,
Rustle thy boughs and set thy trunk
all bare,
And let these bands of greenery which
ensphere thee
Drop heavily down, burst, shattered,
everywhere!
Because, in this deep joy to see and
hear thee,
And breathe within thy shadow a
new air,
I do not think of thee—I am too
near thee.

XXX.

I SEE thine image through my tears
to-night,
And yet to-day I saw thee smiling.
How
Refer the cause? Belovèd, is it thou
Or I who makes me sad? The acolyte,
Amid the chanted joy and thankful
rite,
May so fall flat, with pale insensate
brow,
On the altar-stair. I hear thy voice
and vow,
Perplexed, uncertain, since thou art
out of sight,
As he, in his swooning ears, the
choir's amen.
Beloved, dost thou love? or did I see
all
The glory as I dreamed, and fainted
when
Too vehement light dilated my ideal,
For my soul's eyes? Will that light
come again,
As now these tears come falling hot
and real?

XXXI.

THOU comest! all is said without a
word.
I sit beneath thy looks, as children
do
In the noon sun, with souls that
tremble through
Their happy eyelids from an un-
av erred
Yet prodigal inward joy. Behold,
I erred
In that last doubt! and yet I cannot
rue
The sin most, but the occasion,—that
we two
Should for a moment stand unmind-
istered
By a mutual presence. Ah, keep
near and close,
Thou dove-like help! and, when my
fears would rise,
With thy broad heart serenely inter-
pose:
Brood down with thy divine suffi-
ciencies
These thoughts which tremble when
bereft of those,
Like callow birds left desert to the
skies.

XXXII.

THE first time that the sun rose on
thine oath
To love me, I looked forward to the
moon
To slacken all those bonds which
seemed too soon
And quickly tied to make a lasting
troth.
Quick-loving hearts, I thought, may
quickly loathe;
And, looking on myself, I seemed
not one
For such man's love! — more like an
out-of-tune
Worn viol a good singer would be
wroth
To spoil his song with, and which,
snatched in haste,
Is laid down at the first ill-sounding
note.

XXXIII.

Yes, call me by my pet name! let me
hear
The name I used to run at, when a
child,
From innocent play, and leave the
cowslips piled,
To glance up in some face that proved
me dear
With the look of its eyes. I miss the
clear
Fond voices, which, being drawn and
reconciled
Into the music of heaven's undefiled,
Call me no longer. Silence on the
bier,
While I call God — call God! So let
thy mouth
Be heir to those who are now exani-
mate.
Gather the north flowers to complete
the south,
And catch the early love up in the
late.
Yes, call me by that name, and I, in
truth,
With the same heart, will answer,
and not wait.

XXXIV.

WITH the same heart, I said, I'll answer thee
As those, when thou shalt call me by my name.
Lo, the vain promise! is the same, the same,
Perplexed and ruffled by life's strategy?
When called before, I told how hastily
I dropped my flowers, or brake off from a game,
To run and answer with the smile that came
At play last moment, and went on with me
Through my obedience. When I answer now,
I drop a grave thought, break from solitude;
Yet still my heart goes to thee; ponder how,—
Not as to a single good, but all my good!
Lay thy hand on it, best one, and allow
That no child's foot could run fast as this blood.

XXXV.

If I leave all for thee, wilt thou exchange,
And be all to me? Shall I never miss
Home-talk and blessing, and the common kiss
That comes to each in turn, nor count it strange,
When I lock up, to drop on a new range
Of walls and floors,—another home than this?
Nay, wilt thou fill that place by me which is
Filled by dead eyes too tender to know change?
That's hardest. If to conquer love has tried,
To conquer grief tries more, as all things prove;
For grief, indeed, is love and grief beside.
Alas! I have grieved so, I am hard to love.
Yet love me, wilt thou? Open thine heart wide,
And fold within the wet wings of thy dove.

XXXVI.

WHEN we met first and loved, I did not build
Upon the event with marble. Could it mean
To last,—a love set pendulous between
Sorrow and sorrow? Nay, I rather thrilled,
Distrusting every light that seemed to gild
The onward path, and feared to overlean
A finger even. And, though I have grown serene
And strong since then, I think that God has willed
A still renewable fear . . . O love, O troth . . .
Lest these encasped hands should never hold,
This mutual kiss drop down between us both
As an unowned thing, once the lips being cold.
And Love, be false! if he, to keep one oath,
Must lose one joy, by his life's star foretold.

XXXVII.

PARDON, oh, pardon, that my soul should make,
Of all that strong divineness which I know
For thine and thee, an image only so
Formed of the sand, and fit to shift and break.
It is that distant years which did not take
Thy sovereignty, recoiling with a blow,
Have forced my swimming brain to undergo
Their doubt and dread, and blindly to forsake
Thy purity of likeness, and distort
Thy worthiest love to a worthless counterfeit:
As if a shipwrecked Pagan, safe in port,
His guardian sea-god to commemorate,
Should set a sculptured porpoise, gills a-snort
And vibrant tail, within the temple-gate.

XXXVIII.

FIRST time he kissed me, he but only
kissed
The fingers of this hand wherewith I
wrote;
And ever since, it grew more clean
and white,
Slow to world-greetings, quick with
its "Oh list!"
When the angels speak. A ring of
amethyst
I could not wear here plainer to my
sight
Than that first kiss. The second
passed in height
The first, and sought the forehead,
and half missed,
Half falling on the hair. Oh beyond
meed!
That was the chrism of love, which
love's own crown
With sanctifying sweetness did pre-
cede.
The third upon my lips was folded
down
In perfect purple state; since when,
indeed,
I have been proud and said, "My
love, my own."

XXXIX.

BECAUSE thou hast the power, and
own'st the grace,
To look through and behind this mask
of me,
(Against which years have beat thus
blanchingly)
With their rains), and behold my
soul's true face,
The dim and weary witness of life's
race;
Because thou hast the faith and love
to see,
Through that same soul's distracting
lethargy,
The patient angel waiting for a place
In the new heavens; because nor sin
nor woe,
Nor God's infliction, nor death's
neighborhood,
Nor all which others, viewing, turn to
go,
Nor all which makes me tired of all,
self-viewed,—
Nothing repels thee, . . . dearest,
teach me so
To pour out gratitude, as thou dost,
good!

XL.

OH yes! they love through all this
world of ours!
I will not gainsay love, called love,
forsooth.
I have heard love talked in my early
youth,
And since, not so long back but that
the flowers
Then gathered smell still. Mussul-
mans and Giaours
Throw kerchiefs at a smile, and have
no rath
For any weeping. Polypheme's white
tooth
Slips on the nut, if, after frequent
showers,
The shell is over-smooth; and not so
much
Will turn the thing called love aside
to hate,
Or else to oblivion. But thou art not
such
A lover, my beloved! thou canst
wait
Through sorrow and sickness, to bring
souls to touch,
And think it soon when others cry,
"Too late!"

XLI.

I THANK all who have loved me in
their hearts,
With thanks and love from mine.
Deep thanks to all
Who paused a little near the prison-
wall
To hear my music in its louder
parts,
Ere they went onward, each one to
the mart's
Or temple's occupation, beyond call.
But thou, who, in my voice's sink and
fall
When the sob took it, thy divinest
art's
Own instrument didst drop down at
thy foot
To hearken what I said between my
tears, . . .
Instruct me how to thank thee! Oh,
to shoot
My soul's full meaning into future
years,
That they should lend it utterance,
and salute
Love that endures, from Life that
disappears!

XLII.

"My future will not copy fair my past."
 I wrote that once: and thinking at
 my side
 My ministering life-angel justified
 The word by his appealing look up-
 cast
 To the white throne of God, I turned
 at last,
 And there, instead, saw thee, not un-
 allied
 To angels in thy soul. Then I, long
 tried
 By natural ills, received the comfort
 fast;
 While budding, at thy sight, my pil-
 grim's staff
 Gave out green leaves with morning
 dews impearled.
 I seek no copy now of life's first half:
 Leave here the pages with long mus-
 ing curled,
 And write me new my future's epi-
 graph, —
 New angel mine, unhoped for in the
 world !

XLIII.

How do I love thee? Let me count
 the ways.
 I love thee to the depth and breadth
 and height
 My soul can reach, when feeling out
 of sight
 For the ends of being and ideal grace.
 I love thee to the level of every day's
 Most quiet need, by sun and candle-
 light.
 I love thee freely, as men strive for
 right.
 I love thee purely, as they turn from
 praise.

I love thee with the passion put to
 use
 In my old griefs, and with my child-
 hood's faith.
 I love thee with a love I seemed to
 lose
 With my lost saints. I love thee with
 the breath,
 Smiles, tears, of all my life; and, if
 God choose,
 I shall but love thee better after
 death.

XLIV.

BELOVED, thou hast brought me many
 flowers
 Plucked in the garden all the sum-
 mer through
 And winter; and it seemed as if they
 grew
 In this close room, nor missed the sun
 and showers.
 So, in the like name of that love of
 ours,
 Take back these thoughts which here
 unfolded too,
 And which on warm and cold days I
 withdrew
 From my heart's ground. Indeed,
 those beds and bower
 Be overgrown with bitter weeds and
 rue,
 And wait thy weeding; yet here's
 eglantine,
 Here's ivy! Take them, as I used to
 do
 Thy flowers, and keep them where
 they shall not pine.
 Instruct thine eyes to keep their col-
 ors true,
 And tell thy soul their roots are left
 in mine.



"I heard, last night, a little child go singing
'Neath Casa Guidi windows by the church." — Page 429.

CASA GUIDI WINDOWS.

A Poem,

IN TWO PARTS.

THIS poem contains the impressions of the writer upon events in Tuscany of which she was a witness. "From a window," the critic may demur. She bows to the objection in the very title of her work. No continuous narrative nor exposition of political philosophy is attempted by her. It is a simple story of personal impressions, whose only value is in the intensity with which they were received, as proving her warm affection for a beautiful and unfortunate country, and the sincerity with which they are related, as indicating her own good faith, and freedom from partisanship.

Of the two parts of this poem, the first was written nearly three years ago; while the second resumes the actual situation of 1851. The discrepancy between the two parts is a sufficient guaranty to the public of the truthfulness of the writer, who, though she certainly escaped the epidemic "falling sickness" of enthusiasm for Pio Nono, takes shame upon herself that she believed, like a woman, some royal oaths, and lost sight of the probable consequences of some obvious popular defects. If the discrepancy should be painful to the reader, let him understand that to the writer it has been more so. But such discrepancies we are called upon to accept at every hour by the conditions of our nature, implying the interval between aspiration and performance, between faith and disillusion, between hope and fact.

"O trusted broken prophecy,
O richest fortune sourly crost,
Born for the future, to the future lost!"

Nay, not lost to the future in this case. The future of Italy shall not be disinherited.

FLORENCE, 1851.

PART I.

I HEARD last night a little child go
singing
'Neath Casa Guidi windows, by the
church,
"O bella libertà, O bella!" stringing
The same words still on notes, he
went in search
So high for, you concluded the up-
springing
Of such a nimble bird to sky from
perch

Must leave the whole bush in a trem-
ble green,
And that the heart of Italy must
beat,
While such a voice had leave to rise
serene
"Twixt church and palace of a Flor-
ence street:
A little child, too, who not long had
been
By mother's finger steadied on his
feet,
And still "O bella libertà" he sang.

Then I thought, musing, of the innumerous
 Sweet songs which still for Italy outrang
 From older singers' lips, who sang not thus
 Exultingly and purely, yet, with pang
 Fast sheathed in music, touched the heart of us
 So finely, that the pity scarcely pained.
 I thought how Filicea led on others,
 Bewailers for their Italy-enchained,
 And how they call her childless among mothers,
 Widow of empires, ay, and scarce refrained
 Cursing her beauty to her face, as brothers
 Might a shamed sister's, — "Had she been less fair,
 She were less wretched," — how, evoking so
 From congregated wrong and heaped despair
 Of men and women writhing under blow,
 Harrowed and hideous in a filthy lair,
 Some personating image wherein woe
 Was wrapt in beauty from offending much,
 They called it Cybele, or Niobe,
 Or laid it corpse-like on a bier for such,
 Where all the world might drop for Italy
 Those cadenced tears which burn not where they touch, —
 "Juliet of nations, canst thou die as we?"
 And was the violet crown that crowned thy head
 So over-large, though new buds made it rough,
 It slipped down, and across thine eyelids dead,
 O sweet, fair Juliet?" Of such songs enough,
 Too many of such complaints! Behold, instead,
 Void at Verona, Juliet's marble trough:¹
 As void as that is, are all images Men set between themselves and actual wrong

¹ They show at Verona, as the tomb of Juliet, an empty trough of stone.

To catch the weight of pity, meet the stress
 Of conscience; since 'tis easier to gaze long
 On mournful masks and sad effigies Than on real, live, weak creatures crushed by strong.
 For me, who stand in Italy to-day Where worthier poets stood and sang before,
 I kiss their footsteps, yet their words gainsay.
 I can but muse in hope upon this shore
 Of golden Arno as it shoots away Through Florence' heart beneath her bridges four, —
 Bent bridges seeming to strain off like bows,
 And tremble while the arrowy under-tide
 Shoots on, and cleaves the marble as it goes,
 And strikes up palace-walls on either side,
 And froths the cornice out in glittering rows,
 With doors and windows quaintly multiplied,
 And terrace-sweeps, and gazers upon all,
 By whom if flower or kerchief were thrown out
 From any lattice there, the same would fall
 Into the river underneath, no doubt.
 It runs so close and fast 'twixt wall and wall.
 How beautiful! The mountains from without
 In silence listen for the word said next.
 What word will men say, — here where Giotto planted His campanile like an unperplexed Fine question heavenward, touching the things granted
 A noble people, who, being greatly vexed
 In act, in aspiration keep undaunted?
 What word will God say? Michel's Night and Day
 And Dawn and Twilight wait in marble scorn,¹

¹ These famous statues recline in the Sangrest Nuova, on the tombs of Giuliano de' Medici, third son of Lorenzo the Magnificent, and Lorenzo of Urbino, his grandson.

Like dogs upon a dunghill, couched
on clay
From whence the Medicane stamp's
outworn,
The final putting-off of all such
sway
By all such hands, and freeing of the
unborn
In Florence and the great world
outside Florence.
Three hundred years his patient stat-
ues wait
In that small chapel of the dim St.
Lawrence:
Day's eyes are breaking bold and pas-
sionate
Over his shoulder, and will flash
abhorrence
On darkness, and with level looks
meet fate,
When once loose from that marble
film of theirs;
The Night has wild dreams in her
sleep, the Dawn
Is haggard as the sleepless, Twi-
light wears
A sort of horror; as the veil with-
drawn
'Twixt the artist's soul and works
had left them heirs
Of speechless thoughts which would
not quail nor fawn,
Of angers and contempts, of hope
and love:
For not without a meaning did he
place
The princely Urbino on the seat
above
With everlasting shadow on his face,
While the slow dawns and twilights
disapprove
The ashes of his long-extinguished
race
Which never more shall clog the
feet of men.
I do believe, divinest Angelo,
That winter-hour in Via Larga,
when
They bade thee build a statue up in
snow,¹
And straight that marvel of thine
art again
Dissolved beneath the sun's Italian
glow,

Thine eycs, dilated with the plastic
passion,
Thawing, too, in drops of wounded
manhood, since,
To mock alike thine art and indig-
nation,
Laughed at the palace-window the
new prince,—
("Ahal this genius needs for ex-
altation,
When all's said, and howe'er the
proud may wince,
A little marble from our princely
mines!")
I do believe that hour thou laughdest
too
For the whole sad world, and for
thy Florentines,
After those few tears, which were
only few!
That as, beneath the sun, the grand
white lines
Of thy snow-statue trembled and
withdrew,—
The head, erect as Jove's, being
palmed first,
The cyclids flattened, the full brow
turned blank,
The right hand, raised but now as
if it curst,
Dropt, a mere snowball (till the peo-
ple sank
Their voices, though a louder laugh-
ter burst
From the royal window)— thou
couldst proudly thank
God and the prince for promise and
presage,
And laugh the laugh back, I think
verily,
Thine eyes being purged by tears
of righteous rage
To read a wrong into a prophecy,
And measure a true great man's
heritage
Against a mere great-duke's posterity.
I think thy soul said then, "I do
not need
A princedom and its quarries, after
all;
For if I write, paint, carve a word,
indeed,
On book, or board, or dust, on floor,
or wall,
The same is kept of God, who taketh
heed
That not a letter of the meaning fall
Or ere it touch and teach his world's
deep heart,

Strozzi's epigram on the Night, with Mi-
chel Angelo's rejoinder, is well known.
¹ This mocking task was set by Pietro,
the unworthy successor of Lorenzo the Mag-
nificent.

Outlasting, therefore, all your lordships, sir !
 So keep your stone, beseech you, for your part,
 To cover up your grave-place, and refer
 The proper titles: I live by my art.
 The thought I threw into this snow shall stir
 This gazing people when their gaze is done;
 And the tradition of your act and mine,
 When all the snow is melted in the sun,
 Shall gather up for unborn men a sign Of what is the true princedom; ay, and none
 Shall laugh that day, except the drunk with wine."

Amen, great Angelo ! the day's at hand.
 If many laugh not on it, shall we weep ?
 Much more we must not, let us understand.
 Through rhymers sonneteering in their sleep,
 And archaists mumbling dry bones up the land,
 And sketchers lauding ruined towns a-heap, —
 Through all that drowsy hum of voices smooth,
 The hopeful bird mounts carolling from brake,
 The hopeful child, with leaps to catch his growth,
 Sings open-eyed for liberty's sweet sake;
 And I, a singer also from my youth, Prefer to sing with these who are awake,
 With birds, with babes, with men who will not fear
 The baptism of the holy morning dew, (And many of such wakers now are here,
 Complete in their anointed manhood, who
 Will greatly dare, and greatlier persevere,) Than join those old thin voices with my new,
 And sigh for Italy with some safe sigh Cooped up in music 'twixt an oh and ah;

Nay, hand in hand with that young child will I Go singing rather, "*Bella libertà,*" Than, with those poets, croon the dead, or cry "*Se tu men bella fossi, Italia !*"

* "Less wretched if less fair." Perhaps a truth Is so far plain in this, that Italy, Long trammelled with the purple of her youth Against her age's ripe activity, Sits still upon her tombs, without death's ruth, But also without life's brave energy. "Now tell us what is Italy ?" men ask; And others answer, "Virgil, Cicero, Catullus, Cæsar." What beside, to task The memory closer? — "Why, Boccaccio, Dante, Petrarcha," — and if still the flask Appears to yield its wine by drops too slow, — "Angelo, Raffael, Pergolese," — all Whose strong hearts beat through stone, or charged again The paints with fire of souls electrical, Or broke up heaven for music. What more then ? Why, then, no more. The chaplet's last heads fall In naming the last saintship within ken, And, after that, none prayeth in the land. Alas ! this Italy has too long swept Heroic ashes up for hour-glass sand; Of her own past, impassioned nympho-lept ! Consenting to be nailed here by the hand To the very bay-tree under which she stept A queen of old, and plucked a leafy branch; And, licensing the world too long indeed To use her broad phylacteries to stanch And stop her bloody lips, she takes no heed How one clear word would draw an avalanche Of living sons around her to succeed

The vanished generations. Can she count
These oil-eaters with large, live,
mobile mouths

Agape for macaroni, in the amount
Of consecrated heroes of her south's
Bright rosary? The pitcher at the
fount.

The gift of gods, being broken, she
much loathes

To let the ground-leaves of the
place confer

A natural bowl. So henceforth she
would seem

No nation, but the poet's pensioner,
With alms from every land of song
and dream,

While aye her pipers sadly pipe of
her

Until their proper breaths, in that ex-
treme

Of sighing, split the reed on which
they played;

Of which, no more. But never say
"No more"

To Italy's life! Her memories un-
dismayed

Still argue "evermore;" her graves
implore

Her future to be strong, and not
afraid;

Her very statues send their looks be-
fore.

We do not serve the dead: the past
is past.

God lives, and lifts his glorious morn-
ings up

Before the eyes of men awake at
last;

Who put awav' the meats they used to
sup,

And down upon the dust of earth
outcast

The dregs remaining of the ancient
cup,

Then turned to wakeful prayer and
worthy act.

The dead, upon their awful 'vantage
ground,

The sun not in their faces, shall ab-
stract

No more our strength: we will not be
discrowned

As guardians of their crowns, nor
deign transact

A barter of the present, for a sound
Of good so counted in the foregone
days.

O dead! ye shall no longer cling to
us

With rigid hands of desiccating
praise,

And drag us backward by the gar-
ment thus,

To stand and land you in long-
drawn virlays.

We will not henceforth be oblivious
Of our own lives, because ye lived
before,

Nor of our acts, because ye acted
well.

We thank you that ye first un-
latched the door,

But will not make it inaccessible
By thankings on the threshold any
more.

We hurry onward to extinguish hell
With our fresh souls, our younger
hope, and God's

Maturity of purpose. Soon shall we
Die also, and, that then our periods
Of life may round themselves to mem-
ory

As smoothly as on our graves the
burial-sods,

We now must look to it to excel as
ye,

And bear our age as far, unlimited
By the last mind-mark; so, to be in-
voked

By future generations, as their
dead.

'Tis true, that, when the dust of death
has choked

A great man's voice, the common
words he said

Turn oracles, the common thoughts
he yoked

Like horses, draw like griffins: this
is true

And acceptable. I, too, should de-
sire,

When men make record with the
flowers they strew,

"Savonarola's soul went out in fire
Upon our Grand-duke's piazza,¹ and
burned through

A moment first, or ere he did expire,
The veil betwixt the right and
wrong, and showed

¹ Savonarola was burnt for his testimony
against papal corruptions as early as March,
1498; and, as late as our own day, it has
been a custom in Florence to strew with vio-
lets the pavement where he suffered, in
grateful recognition of the anniversary.

How near God sate and judged the judges there;" —
 Upon the self-same pavement over-strewed
 To cast my violets with as reverent care,
 And prove that all the winters which have snowed
 Cannot snow out the scent from stones and air,
 Of a sincere man's virtues. This was he,
 Savonarola, who, while Peter sank With his whole boat-load, called courageously,
 "Wake Christ, wake Christ!" who, having tried the tank
 Of old church-waters used for baptistry
 Ere Luther came to spill them, swore they stank;
 Who also by a princely death-bed cried,
 "Loose Florence, or God will not loose thy soul!"
 Then fell back the Magnificent, and died
 Beneath the star-look shooting from the cowl,
 Which turned to wormwood-bitterness the wide
 Deep sea of his ambitions. It were foul
 To grudge Savonarola and the rest Their violets; rather pay them quick and fresh.
 The emphasis of death makes manifest
 The eloquence of action in our flesh;
 And men who living were but dimly guessed,
 When once free from their life's entangled mesh,
 Show their full length in graves, or oft indeed
 Exaggerate their stature, in the flat,
 To noble admirations which exceed
 Most nobly, yet will calculate in that But accurately. We who are the seed
 Of buried creatures, if we turned and spat
 Upon our antecedents, we were vile.
 Bring violets rather. If these had not walked
 Their furlong, could we hope to walk our mile?

Therefore bring violets. Yet if we, self-balked,
 Stand still, a-strewing violets all the while,
 These moved in vain, of whom we have vainly talked.
 So rise up henceforth with a cheerful smile,
 And, having strewn the violets, reap the corn,
 And, having reaped and garnered, bring the plough
 And draw new furrows 'neath the healthy morn,
 And plant the great Hereafter in this Now.
 Of old 'twas so. How step by step was worn,
 As each man gained on each securely! how
 Each by his own strength sought his own Ideal,—
 The ultimate Perfection leaning bright
 From out the sun and stars to bless the leal
 And earnest search of all for Fair and Right
 Through doubtful forms by earth accounted real!
 Because old Jubal blew into delight
 The souls of men with clear-piped melodies,
 If youthful Asaph were content at most
 To draw from Jubal's grave, with listening eyes,
 Traditional music's floating ghost
 Into the grass-grown silence, were it wise?
 And wasn't not wiser, Jubal's breath being lost,
 That Miriam clashed her cymbals to surprise
 The sun between her white arms flung apart,
 With new glad golden sounds? that David's strings
 O'erflowed his hand with music from his heart?
 So harmony grows full from many springs,
 And happy accident turns holy art.
 You enter, in your Florence wanderings,

The Church of St. Maria Novella.
Pass
The left stair, where at plague-time
Machiavel¹
Saw one with set fair face as in a
glass,
Dressed out against the fear of death
and hell,
Rustling her silks in pauses of the
mass
To keep the thought off how her hus-
band fell,
When she left home, stark dead
across her feet, —
The stair leads up to what the Or-
gagnas save
Of Dante's demons; you in pass-
ing it
Ascend the right stair from the far-
ther nave
To muse in a small chapel scarcely
lit
By Cimabue's Virgin. Bright and
brave,
That picture was accounted, mark,
of old:
A king stood bare before its sovran
grace,²
A reverent people shouted to be-
hold
The picture, not the king; and even
the place
Containing such a miracle grew
bold,
Named the Glad Borgo from that
beauteous face
Which thrilled the artist after work
to think
His own ideal Mary-smile should
stand
So very near him, — he, within the
brink
Of all that glory, let in by his hand
With too divine a rashness! Yet
none shrink
Who come to gaze here now; albeit
'twas planned
Sublimely in the thought's simpli-
city.

The Lady, throned in empyreal state,
Minds only, the young Babe upon
her knee,
While sidelong angels bear the royal
weight,
Prostrated meekly, smiling ten-
derly
Oblivion of their wings; the child
thereat
Stretching its hand like God. If
any should,
Because of some stiff draperies and
loose joints,
Gaze scorn down from the heights
of Raffaelhood
On Cimabue's picture, Heaven anoints
The head of no such critic, and his
blood
The poet's curse strikes full on, and
appoints
To ague and cold spasms forever-
more.
A noble picture! worthy of the shout
Wherewith along the streets the
people bore
Its cherub-faces which the sun threw
out
Until they stooped, and entered the
church-door.
Yet rightly was young Giotto talked
about,
Whom Cimabue found among the
sheep,¹
And knew, as gods know gods, and
carried home
To paint the things he had painted,
with a deep
And fuller insight, and so overcome
His Chapel-Lady with a heavenlier
sweep
Of light; for thus we mount into the
sun
Of great things known or acted.
I hold, too,
That Cimabue smiled upon the lad
At the first stroke which passed
what he could do,
Or else his Virgin's smile had never
had
Such sweetness in't. All great men
who foreknew
Their heirs in art, for art's sake have
been glad,

¹ See his description of the plague in Florence.

² Charles of Anjou, in his passage through Florence, was permitted to see this picture while yet in Cimabue's "bottega." The populace followed the royal visitor, and, from the universal delight and admiration, the quarter of the city in which the artist lived was called "Borgo Allegri." The picture was carried in triumph to the church, and deposited there.

¹ How Cimabue found Giotto, the sheep-herd-boy, sketching a ram of his flock upon a stone, is prettily told by Vasari, who also relates that the elder artist Margheritone died "infestidito" of the successes of the new school.

And bent their old white heads as
if uncrowned,
Fanatics of their pure ideals still
Far more than of their triumphs,
which were found
With some less vehement struggle of
the will.
If old Margheritone trembled,
swooned,
And died despairing at the open
sill
Of other men's achievements (who
achieved
By loving art beyond the master) he
Was old Margheritone, and con-
ceived
Never, at first youth and most ecsta-
sy,
A Virgin like that dream of one,
which heaved
The death-sigh from his heart. If
wistfully
Margheritone sickened at the smell
Of Cimabue's laurel, let him go!
For Cimabue stood up very well
In spite of Giotto's, and Angelico
The artist-saint kept smiling in his
cell
The smile with which he welcomed
the sweet slow
Inbreak of angels (whitening
through the dim
That he might paint them) while the
sudden sense
Of Raffael's future was revealed to
him
By force of his own fair works' com-
petence.
The same blue waters where the
dolphins swim
Suggest the tritons. Through the
blue immense
Strike out, all swimmers! cling not
in the way
Of one another, so to sink, but learn
The strong man's impulse, catch
the freshening spray
He throws up in his motions, and dis-
cern
By his clear westering eye, the
time of day.
Thou, God, hast set us worthy gifts
to earn
Besides thy heaven and thee! and
when I say
There's room here for the weakest
man alive
To live and die, there's room, too,
I repeat,

For all the strongest to live well, and
strive
Their own way by their individual
heat,
Like some new bee-swarm leaving
the old hive,
Despite the wax which tempts so
violet-sweet.
Then let the living live, the dead re-
tain
Their grave-cold flowers! though
honor's best supplied
By bringing actions to prove theirs
not vain.

Cold graves, we say? it shall be
testified
That living men who burn in heart
and brain,
Without the dead were colder. If
we tried
To sink the past beneath our feet, be
sure
The future would not stand. Pre-
cipitate
This old roof from the shrine, and, in-
secure,
The nesting swallows fly off, mate
from mate.
How scant the gardens, if the graves
were fewer!
The tall green poplars grew no
longer straight
Whose tops not looked to Troy.
Would any fight
For Athens, and not swear by Mara-
thon?
Who dared build temples, without
tombs in sight?
Or live, without some dead man's
benison?
Or seek truth, hope for good, and
strive for right,
If, looking up, he saw not in the
sun
Some angel of the martyrs all day
long
Standing and waiting? Your last
rhythm will need
Your earliest keynote. Could I sing
this song,
If my dead masters had not taken
heed
To help the heavens and earth to
make me strong,
As the wind ever will find out some
reed,
And touch it to such issues as be-
long

To such a frail thing? None may
grudge the dead
Libations from full cups. Unless we
choose
To look back to the hills behind us
spread,
The plains before us sadden and con-
fuse:
If orphaned, we are disinherited.

I would but turn these lachrymals to
use,
And pour fresh oil in from the olive-
grove,
To furnish them as new lamps. Shall
I say
What made my heart beat with ex-
ulting love
A few days back? —
The day was such a day
As Florence owes the sun. The
sky above,
Its weight upon the mountains seemed
to lay.
And palpitate in g'ory, like a dove
Who has flown too fast, full-hearted —
take away
The image! for the heart of man
beat higher
That day in Florence, flooding all her
streets
And piazzas with a tumult and des-
sire.
The people, with accumulated heats,
And faces turned one way, as if one
fire
Both drew and flushed them, left
their ancient beats,
And went up toward the palace-
Pitti wall
To thank their Grand-duke, who, not
quite of course,
Had graciously permitted, at their
call,
The citizens to use their civic force
To guard their civic homes. So,
one and all,
The Tuscan cities streamed up to the
source
Of this new good at Florence, tak-
ing it
As good so far, presageful of more
good, —
The first torch of Italian freedom,
lit
To toss in the next tiger's face who
should
Approach too near them in a greedy
fit, —

The first pulse of an even flow of
blood
To prove the level of Italian veins
Towards rights perceived and grant-
ed. How we gazed
From Casa Guidi windows, while,
in trains
Of orderly procession — banners
raised,
And intermittent bursts of martial
strains
Which died upon the shout, as if
amazed
By gladness beyond music — they
passed on!
The Magistracy, with insignia, passed,
And all the people shouted in the
sun,
And all the thousand windows which
had cast
A ripple of silks in blue and scarlet
down,
(As if the houses overflowed at last,)
Seemed growing larger with fair
heads and eyes.
The Lawyers passed, and still arose
the shout,
And hands broke from the windows
to surprise
Those grave, calm brows with bay-
tree leaves thrown out.
The Priesthood passed, the friars
with worldly-wise
Keen, sidelong glances from their
beards about
The street to see who shouted; many
a monk
Who takes a long rope in the waist
was there?
Whereat the popular exultation
drunk
With indrawn "vivas" the whole
sunny air,
While through the murmuring win-
dows rose and sunk
A cloud of kerchiefed hands, — "The
Church makes fair
Her welcome in the new Pope's
name." Ensued
The black sign of the "Martyrs" —
(name no name,
But count the graves in silence.)
Next were viewed
The Artists; next the Trades; and
after came
The People, — flag and sign, and
rights as good, —
And very loud the shout was for that
same

Motto, "Il popolo." IL Porolo,—
The word means dukedom, empire,
majesty;
And kings in such an hour might
read it so.
And next, with banners, each in his
degree,
Deputed representatives a-row
Of every separate state of Tuscany:
Siena's she-wolf, bristling on the
fold
Of the first flag, preceded Pisa's hare;
And Massa's lion floated calm in
gold,
Pienza's following with his silver
stare;
Arezzo's steed pranced clear from
bridle-hold,—
And well might shout our Florence,
greeting there
These, and more brethren. Last,
the world had sent
The various children of her teeming
flanks—
Greeks, English, French—as if to
a parliament
Of lovers of her Italy in ranks,
Each bearing its land's symbol reverent;
At which the stones seemed breaking
into thanks,
And rattling up the sky, such
sounds in proof
Arose, the very house-walls seemed to
bend;
The very windows, up from door to
roof,
Flashed out a rapture of bright heads,
to mend
With passionate looks the gesture's
whirling off
A hurricane of leaves. Three hours
did end
While all these passed; and ever, in
the crowd,
Rude men, unconscious of the tears
that kept
Their beards moist, shouted; some
few laughed aloud,
And none asked any why they
laughed and wept:
Friends kissed each other's cheeks,
and foes long vowed
More warmly did it; two-months
babies leapt
Right upward in their mother's
arms, whose black,
Wide, glittering eyes looked else-
where; lovers pressed

Each before either, neither glancing
back;
And peasant maidens smoothly 'tired
and tressed
Forgot to finger on their throats
the slack
Great pearl-strings; while old blind
men would not rest,
But pattered with their staves, and
slid their shoes
Along the stones, and smiled as if
they saw.
O Heaven, I think that day had no-
ble use
Among God's days! So near stood
Right and Law,
Both mutually forbore! Law
would not bruise,
Nor Right deny; and each in reverent
awe
Honored the other. And if, ne'er-
theless,
That good day's sun delivered to the
vines
No charta, and the liberal Duke's
excess
Did scarce exceed a Guelf's or Ghibel-
line's
In any special actual righteousness
Of what that day he granted, still the
signs
Are good and full of promise, we
must say,
When multitudes approach their kings
with prayers,
And kings concede their people's
right to pray,
Both in one sunshine. Griefs are not
despairs,
So uttered; nor can royal claims dis-
may
When men from humble homes and
ducal chairs,
Hate wrong together. It was well
to view
Those banners ruffled in a ruler's face
Inscribed, "Live, freedom, union,
and all true
Brave patriots who are aided by God's
grace!"
Nor was it ill when Leopoldo drew
His little children to the window-
place
He stood in at the Pitti, to suggest
They, too, should govern as the people
willed.
What a cry rose then! Some, who
saw the best,

Declared his eyes filled up and over-filled
 With good, warm human tears,
 which unrepressed
 Ran down, I like his face: the forehead's build
 Has no capacious genius, yet perhaps
 Sufficient comprehension; mild and sad,
 And careful nobly, not with care
 that wraps
 Self-loving hearts, to stifle and make mad,
 But careful with the care that shuns
 a lapse
 Of faith and duty; studious not to add
 A burden in the gathering of a gain.
 And so, God save the Duke, I say
 with those
 Who that day shouted it; and, while
 dukes reign,
 May all wear in the visible overflows
 Of spirit such a look of careful pain!
 For God must love it better than repose.
 And all the people who went up to let
 Their hearts out to that Duke, as
 has been told —
 Where guess ye that the living people me,
 Kept tryst, formed ranks, chose
 leaders, first unrolled
 Their banners?
 In the Loggia? where is set
 Cellini's godlike Perseus, bronze or gold,
 (How name the metal, when the statue flings
 Its soul so in your eyes?) with brow
 and sword
 Superbly calm, as all opposing things,
 Slain with the Gorgon, were no more abhorred
 Since ended?
 No, the people sought no wings
 From Perseus in the Loggia, nor implored
 An inspiration in the place beside
 From that dim bust of Brutus,
 jagged and grand,
 Where Buonarroti passionately tried
 From out the close-clenched marble
 to demand

The head of Rome's sublimest homicide,
 Then dropt the quivering mallet
 from his hand,
 Despairing he could find no model-stuff
 Of Brutus in all Florence where he found
 The gods and gladiators thick enough.
 Nor there! the people chose still holier ground:
 The people, who are simple, blind,
 and rough,
 Know their own angels, after looking round.
 Whom chose they then? where met they?
 On the stone
 Called Dante's, — a plain flat stone
 scarce discerned
 From others in the pavement, — whereupon
 He used to bring his quiet chair out,
 turned
 To Brunelleschi's church, and pour alone
 The lava of his spirit when it burned:
 It is not cold to-day. O passionate
 Poor Dante, who, a banished Florentine,
 Didst sit austere at banquets of the great,
 And muse upon this far-off stone of thine,
 And think how oft some passer used to wait
 A moment, in the golden day's decline,
 With "Good-night, dearest Dante!" — well, good-night!
 I muse now, Dante, and think verily,
 Though chapelled in the by-way, out of sight,
 Ravenna's bones would thrill with ecstasy,
 Couldst know thy favorite stone's elected right
 As tryst-place for thy Tuscans to foresee
 Their earliest chartas from. Good-night, good-morn,
 Henceforward, Dante! now my soul is sure
 That thine is better comforted of scorn,

And looks down earthward in completer cure
 Than when, in Santa Croce Church forlorn
 Of any corpse, the architect and hewer
 Did pile the empty marbles as thy tomb.¹
 For now thou art no longer exiled, now
 Best honored: we salute thee who art come
 Back to the old stone with a softer brow
 Than Giotto drew upon the wall, for some
 Good lovers of our age to track and plough²
 Their way to, through time's ordure stratified,
 And startle broad awake into the dull
 Bargello chamber: now thou'rt milder-eyed,—
 Now Beatrice may leap up glad to cull
 Thy first smile, even in heaven and at her side,
 Like that which, nine years old, looked beautiful
 At May-game. What do I say? I only meant
 That tender Dante loved his Florence well,
 While Florence, now, to love him is content;
 And mark ye, that the piercingest sweet smell
 Of love's dear incense by the living sent
 To find the dead is not accessible
 To lazy livers, no narcotic, not
 Swung in a censer to a sleepy tune,
 But trod out in the morning air by hot,
 Quick spirits who tread firm to ends foreseen,
 And use the name of greatness unforget,
 To meditate what greatness may be done.

For Dante sits in heaven, and ye stand here,
 And more remains for doing, all must feel,
 Than trysting on his stone from year to year
 To shift processions, civic toe to heel,
 The town's thanks to the Pitti. Are ye freer
 For what was felt that day? A chariot-wheel
 May spin fast, yet the chariot never roll;
 But if that day suggested something good,
 And bettered, with one purpose, soul by soul—
 Better means freer. A land's brotherhood
 Is most puissant: men, upon the whole,
 Are what they can be; nations, what they would.

Will, therefore, to be strong, thou Italy!
 Will to be noble! Austrian Metternich
 Can fix no yoke, unless the neck agree;
 And thine is like the lion's when the thick
 Dews shudder from it, and no man would be
 The stroker of his mane, much less would prick
 His nostril with a reed. When nations roar
 Like lions, who shall tame them, and defraud
 Of the due pasture by the river-shore?
 Roar, therefore! shake your dewlaps dry abroad:
 The amphitheatre with open door
 Leads back upon the benches who applaud
 The last spear-thruster.

Yet the heavens forbid
 That we should call on passion to confront
 The brutal with the brutal, and, amid
 This ripening world, suggest a lion-hunt
 And lion's vengeance for the wrongs men did
 And do now, though the spears are getting blunt.

¹ The Florentines, to whom the Ravennese refused the body of Dante (demanded of them "in a late remorse of love"), have given a cenotaph in this church to their divine poet. Something less than a grave!
² In allusion to Mr. Kirkup's discovery of Giotto's fresco portrait of Dante.

We only call, because the sight and proof
Of lion-strength hurts nothing; and to show
A lion-heart, and measure paw with hoof,
Helps something, even, and will instruct a foe,
As well as the onslaught, how to stand aloof;
Or else the world gets past the mere brute blow,
Or given or taken. Children use the fist
Until they are of age to use the brain;
And so we needed Cæsars to assist Man's justice, and Napoleons to explain
God's counsel, when a point was nearly missed,
Until our generations should attain
Christ's stature nearer. Not that we, alas!
Attain already; but a single inch Will raise to look down on the swordsman's pass,
As knightly Roland on the coward's finch:
And, after chloroform and ether-gas,
We find out slowly what the bee and finch
Have ready found, through Nature's lamp in each,—
How to our races we may justify Our individual claims, and, as we reach
Our own grapes, bend the top vines to supply
The children's uses,—how to fill a breach
With olive-branches, — how to quench a lie
With truth, and smite a foe upon the cheek
With Christ's most conquering kiss.
Why, these are things Worth a great nation's finding, to prove weak
The "glorious arms" of military kings.
And so, with wide embrace, my England, seek
To stifle the bad heat and flickerings
Of this world's false and nearly expended fire.

Draw palpitating arrows to the wood,
And twang abroad thy high hopes and thy higher Resolves from that most virtuous altitude,
Till nations shall unconsciously aspire
By looking up to thee, and learn that good And glory are not different. Announce law By freedom; exalt chivalry by peace;
Instruct how clear, calm eyes can overawe,
And how pure hands, stretched simply to release A bond-slave, will not need a sword to draw
To be held dreadful. O my England, crease
Thy purple with no alien agonies, No struggles toward encroachment, no vile war!
Disband thy captains, change thy victories;
Be henceforth prosperous, as the angels are, Helping, not humbling.

Drums and battle-cries Go out in music of the morning-star;
And soon we shall have thinkers in the place
Of fighters, each found able as a man
To strike electric influence through a race,
Unstayed by city-wall and barbican.
The poet shall look grander in the face
Than even of old (when he of Greece began
To sing "that Achillean wrath which slew So many heroes"), seeing he shall treat
The deeds of souls heroic toward the true,
The oracles of life, previsions sweet And awful, like divine swans gliding through
White arms of Leda, which will leave the heat
Of their escaping godship to endue The human medium with a heavenly flush.

Meanwhile, in this same Italy we want
 Not popular passion, to arise and
 crush,
 But popular conscience, which may
 covenant
 For what it knows. Concede without
 a blush,
 To grant the "civic guard" is not to
 grant
 The civic spirit, living and awake:
 Those lappets on your shoulders, citizens,
 Your eyes strain after sideways till
 they ache,
 (While still, in admirations and
 amens,
 The crowd comes up on festa-days
 to take
 The great sight in), are not intelli-
 gence,
 Not courage even: alas! if not the
 sign
 Of something very noble, they are
 nought;
 For every day ye dress your sallow
 kine
 With fringes down their cheeks,
 though unbesought
 They loll their heavy heads, and
 drag the wine,
 And bear the wooden yoke as they
 were taught
 The first day. What ye want is
 light; indeed
 Not sunlight (ye may well look up
 surprised
 To those unfathomable heavens
 that feed
 Your purple hills), but God's light
 organized
 In some high soul crowned capable
 to lead
 The conscious people, conscious and
 advised;
 For, if we lift a people like mere
 clay,
 It falls the same. We want thee, O
 unfound
 And sovran teacher! if thy beard
 be gray
 Or black, we bid thee rise up from
 the ground,
 And speak the word God giveth
 thee to say,
 Inspiring into all this people round,
 Instead of passion, thought, which
 pioneers
 All generous passion, purifies from
 sin,

And strikes the hour for. Rise up,
 teacher! here's
 A crowd to make a nation! best be-
 gin
 By making each a man, till all be
 peers
 Of earth's true patriots and pure
 martyrs in
 Knowing and daring. Best unbar
 the doors
 Which Peter's heirs kept locked so
 overclose
 They only let the mice across the
 floors,
 While every churchman dangles, as
 he goes,
 The great key at his girdle, and ab-
 hors
 In Christ's name meekly. Open wide
 the house,
 Concede the entrance with Christ's
 liberal mind,
 And set the tables with his wine and
 bread.
 What! "Commune in both kinds?"
 In every kind —
 Wine, wafer, love, hope, truth, un-
 limited,
 Nothing kept back. For, when a
 man is blind
 To starlight, will he see the rose is
 red?
 A bondsman shivering at a Jesuit's
 foot —
 "Væ! meū culpā!" — is not like to
 stand
 A freedman at a despot's, and dis-
 pute
 His titles by the balance in his
 hand,
 Weighing them "suo jure." Tend
 the root,
 If careful of the branches, and ex-
 pand
 The inner souls of men before you
 strive
 For civic heroes.
 But the teacher, where?
 From all these crowded faces, all
 alive,
 Eyes, of their own lids flashing them-
 selves bare,
 And brows that with a mobile life
 contrive
 A deeper shadow, — may we in no
 wise dare
 To put a finger out, and touch a
 man,

And cry, "This is the leader"? What, all these!
 Broad heads, black eyes, yet not a soul that ran
 From God down with a message? all, to please
 The donna waving measures with her fan,
 And not the judgment-angel on his knees,
 (The trumpet just an inch off from his lips.)
 Who, when he breathes next, will put out the sun?

Yet mankind's self were foundered in eclipse,
 If lacking doers, with great works to be done;
 And lo, the startled earth already dips
 Back into light; a better day's begun;
 And soon this leader, teacher, will stand plain,
 And build the golden pipes and synthesize
 This people-organ for a holy strain.
 We hold this hope, and still in all these eyes
 Go sounding for the deep look which shall drain
 Suffused thought into channelled enterprise.
 Where is the teacher? What now may he do
 Who shall do greatly? Doth he gird his waist
 With a monk's rope, like Luther?
 or pursue
 The goat, like Tell? or dry his nets in haste,
 Like Masaniello when the sky was blue?
 Keep house, like other peasants, with inlaced
 Bare brawny arms about a favorite child,
 And meditative looks beyond the door,
 (But not to mark the kidling's teeth have filed
 The green shoots of his vine which last year bore
 Full twenty bunches), or on triple-piled
 Throne-velvets sit at ease to bless the poor,
 Like other pontiffs, in the Poorest's name?

The old tiara keeps itself aslope
 Upon his steady brows, which, all the same,
 Bend mildly to permit the people's hope?

Whatever hand shall grasp this ori-flamme
 Whatever man (last peasant or first pope
 Seeking to free his country) shall appear,
 Teach, lead, strike fire into the masses, fill
 These empty bladders with fine air, insphere
 These wills into a unity of will,
 And make of Italy a nation — dear And blessed be that man! the heavens shall kill
 No leaf the earth lets grow for him, and Death
 Shall cast him back upon the lap of Life
 To live more surely in a clarion-breath
 Of hero-music. Brutus with the knife,
 Rienzi with the fasces, throb beneath
 Rome's stones, — and more who threw away joy's fire
 Like Pallas, that the beauty of their souls
 Might ever shine untroubled and entire:
 But if it can be true that he who rolls
 The Church's thunders will reserve her fire
 For only light, from eucharistic bowls
 Will pour new life for nations that expire,
 And rend the scarlet of his papal vest
 To gird the weak loins of his countrymen, —
 I hold that he surpasses all the rest
 Of Romans, heroes, patriots; and that when
 He sat down on the throne, he dispossess
 The first graves of some glory. See again,
 This country-saving is a glorious thing!
 And if a common man achieved it? Well.

Say, a rich man did ? Excellent. A king?
 That grows sublime ? A priest ? Improbable.
 A pope ? Ah, there we stop, and cannot bring
 Our faith up to the leap, with history's bell
 So heavy round the neck of it, albeit
 We fain would grant the possibility
 For thy sake, Pio Nono !

Stretch thy feet
 In that case : I will kiss them reverently.
 As any pilgrim to the papal seat:
 And, such proved possible, thy throne to me
 Shall seem as holy a place as Pellico's
 Venetian dungeon, or as Spielberg's grate,
 At which the Lombard woman hung the rose,
 Of her sweet soul by its own dewy weight,
 To feel the dungeon round her sun-shine close,
 And, pining so, died early, yet too late
 For what she suffered. Yea, I will not choose
 Betwixt thy throne, Pope Pius, and the spot
 Marked red forever, spite of rains and dews,
 Where two fell riddled by the Austrian's shot,—
 The brothers Bandiera, who accuse,
 With one same mother-voice and face
 (that what
 They speak may be invincible) the sins
 Of earth's tormentors before God the just,
 Until the unconscious thunder-bolt begins
 To loosen in his grasp.

And yet we must
 Beware, and mark the natural kiths and kins,
 Of circumstance and office, and distrust
 The rich man reasoning in a poor man's hut,
 The poet who neglects pure truth to prove

Statistic fact, the child who leaves a rut
 For a smoother road, the priest who vows his glove
 Exhales no grace, the prince who walks afoot,
 The woman who has sworn she will not love,
 And this Ninth Pius in Seventh Gregory's chair,
 With Andrea Doria's forehead.

Count what goes to making up a pope, before he wear
 That triple crown. We pass the world-wide throes
 Which went to make the popedom, — the despair
 Of free men, good men, wise men; the dread shows
 Of women's faces, by the fagot's flash
 Tossed out, to the minutest stir and throb
 O' the white lips; the least tremble of a lash,
 To glut the red stare of a licensed mob;
 The short mad cries down oubllettes, and phash
 So horribly far off; priests trained to rob,
 And kings, that, like encouraged nightmares, sate
 On nations' hearts most heavily distressed
 With monstrous sights and apothegms of fate—
 We pass these things, because "the times" are prest
 With necessary charges of the weight
 Of all this sin, and "Calvin, for the rest,
 Made bold to burn Servetus. Ah, men err!"—
 And so do churches! which is all we mean
 To bring to proof in any register
 Of theological fat kine and lean:
 So drive them back into the pens ! refer
 Old sins (with pourpoint, "quotha" and "I ween")
 Entirely to the old times, the old times;
 Nor ever ask why this preponderant

Infallible pure Church could set her
chimies
Most loudly then, just then, — most
jubilant,
Precisely then, when mankind stood
in crimes
Full heart-deep, and Heaven's judgments
were not scant.
Inquire still less what signifies a
church
Of perfect inspiration and pure laws
Who burns the first man with a
brimstone-torch,
And grinds the second, bone by bone,
because
The times, forsooth, are used to
rack and scorch!
What is a holy Church unless she
avows
The times down from their sins?
Did Christ select
Such amiable times to come and
teach
Love to, and mercy? The whole
world were wrecked
If every mere great man, who lives to
reach
A little leaf of popular respect,
Attained not simply by some special
breath
In the age's customs, by some pre-
cedence
In thought and act, which, having
proved him higher
Than those he lived with, proved
his competence
In helping them to wonder and as-
pire.

My words are guiltless of the bigot's
sense.
My soul has fire to mingle with the
fire
Of all these souls, within or out of
doors
Of Rome's church or another. I be-
lieve
In one Priest, and one temple, with
its floors
Of shining jasper gloomed at morn
and eve
By countless knees of earnest au-
ditors,
And crystal walls too lucid to per-
ceive,
That none may take the measure of
the place
And say, "So far the porphyry, then
the flint;

To this mark mercy goes, and there
ends grace,"
Though still the permeable crystals
hint
At some white starry distance,
bathed in space.
I feel how Nature's ice-crusts keep
the dint
Of ~~undersprings~~ of silent Deity.
I hold the articulated gospels which
Show Christ among us crucified on
tree.
I love all who love truth, if poor or
rich
In what they have won of truth pos-
sessively.
No altars, and no hands defiled with
pitch,
Shall scare me off; but I will pray
and eat
With all these, taking leave to choose
my ewers,
And say at last, "Your visible
churches cheat
Their inward types; and, if a church
assures
Of standing without failure and de-
feat,
The same both fails and lies."

To leave which lures
Of wider subject through past years,
— behold,
We come back from the popedom to
the pope,
To ponder what he *must* be, ere we
are bold
For what he *may* be, with our heavy
hope
To trust upon his soul. So, fold by
fold,
Explore this mummy in the priestly
cope,
Transmitted through the darks of
time, to catch
The man within the wrappage, and
discern
How he, an honest man, upon the
watch
Full fifty years for what a man may
learn,
Contrived to get just there; with
what a snatch
Of old-world oboli he had to earn
The passage through; with what a
drowsy sop,
To drench the busy barkings of his
brain;

What ghosts of pale tradition,
wreathed with hop
'Gainst wakeful thought, he had to entertain
For heavenly visions; and consent
to stop
The clock at noon, and let the hour
remain
(Without vain windings ~~up~~) inviolate
Against all chimings from the belfry.
Lo,
From every given pope you must
abate,
Albeit you love him, some things—
good, you know—
Which every given heretic you
hate,
Assumes for his, as being, plainly so.
A pope must hold by popes a little,
—yes,
By councils, from Nicaea up to
Trent,—
By hierocratic empire, more or less
Irresponsible to men,—he must re-
sent
Each man's particular conscience,
and repress
Inquiry, meditation, argument,
As tyrants faction. Also, he must
not
Love truth too dangerously, but pre-
fer
“The interests of the Church” (be-
cause a blot
Is better than a rent, in miniver)
Submit to see the people swallow
hot
Husk-porridge, which his chartered
churchmen stir
Quoting the only true God's epi-
graph,
“Feed my lambs, Peter!” must
consent to sit
Attesting with his pastoral ring and
staff
To such a picture of our Lady, hit
Off well by artist-angels (though
not half
As fair as Giotto would have painted
it,)
To such a vial, where a dead man's
blood
Runs yearly warm beneath a church-
man's finger;
To such a holy house of stone and
wood,
Whereof a cloud of angels was the
bringer

From Bethlehem to Loreto. Were
it good
For any pope on earth to be a flinger
Of stones against these high-niched
counterfeits?
Apostates only are iconoclasts.
He dares not say, while this false
thing abets
That true thing, “This is false.” He
keeps his fasts
And prayers, as prayer and fast
were silver freis
To change a note upon a string that
lasts,
And make a lie a virtue. Now, if
he
Did more than this, higher hoped, and
braver dared,
I think he were a pope in jeopardy,
Or no pope rather, for his truth had
barred
The vaulting of his life; and cer-
tainly,
If he do only this, mankind's regard
Moves on from him at once to seek
some new
Teacher and leader. He is good and
great
According to the deeds a pope can
do;
Most liberal, save those bonds; affec-
tionate,
As princes may be, and, as priests
are, true,
But only the ninth Pius after eight,
When all's praised most. At best
and hopefulest,
He's pope: we want a man! His
heart beats warm;
But, like the prince enchanted to
the waist,
He sits in stone, and hardens by a
charm
Into the marble of his throne high-
placed.
Mild benediction waves his saintly
arm—
So, good! But what we want's a
perfect man,
Complete and all alive: half traver-
tine
Half suits our need, and ill sub-
serves our plan.
Feet, knees, nerves, sinews, energies
divine,
Were never yet too much for men
who ran
In such hard ways as must be this of
thine,

Deliverer whom we seek, whoe'er thou art,
Pope, prince, or peasant! If, indeed, the first,
The noblest, therefore! since the heroic heart
Within thee must be great enough to burst
Those trammels buckling to the baser part
Thy saintly peers in Rome, who crossed and curst
With the same finger.

Come, appear, be found,
If pope or peasant, come! we hear the cock,
The courtier of the mountains when first crowned
With golden dawn; and orient glories flock
To meet the sun upon the highest ground.
Take voice, and work! we wait to hear thee knock
At some one of our Florentine nine gates,
On each of which was imaged a sublime
Face of a Tuscan genius, which, for hate's
And love's sake both, our Florence in her prime
Turned boldly on all comers to her states,
As heroes turned their shields in antiquite time
Emblazoned with honorable acts.
And though The gates are blank now of such images,
And Petrarch looks no more from Nicolo
Toward dear Arezzo, 'twixt the acacia-trees,
Nor Dante, from gate Gallo—still we know,
Despite the razing of the blazonries,
Remains the consecration of the shield:
The dead heroic faces will start out
On all these gates, if foes should take the field,
And blend sublimely, at the earliest shout,
With living heroes who will scorn to yield.
A hair's-breadth even, when, gazing round about,

They find in what a glorious company
They fight the foes of Florence. Who will grudge
His one poor life, when that great man we see
Has given five hundred years, the world being judge
To help the glory of his Italy?
Who, born the fair side of the Alps, will budge,
When Dante stays, when Ariosto stays,
When Petrarch stays forever? Ye bring swords,
My Tuscans? Ay, if wanted in this haze,
Bring swords, but first bring souls,—bring thoughts and words,
Unrusted by a tear of yesterday's, Yet awful by its wrong,—and cut these cords,
And mow this green, lush falseness to the roots,
And shut the mouth of hell below the swathe!
And, if ye can bring songs too, let the lute's recoverable music softly bathe
Some poet's hand, that, through all bursts and bruits
Of popular passion, all unripe and rathe
Convictions of the popular intellect, Ye may not lack a finger up the air,
Annunciative, reproving, pure, erect,
To show which way your first ideal bare
The whiteness of its wings when (sorely pecked)
By falcons on your wrists) it unaware Arose up overhead and out of sight.
Meanwhile, let all the far ends of the world
Breathe back the deep breath of their old delight,
To swell the Italian banner just unfurled.
Help, lands of Europe! for, if Austria fight,
The drums will bar your slumber.
Had ye curled The laurel for your thousand artists' brows,
If these Italian hands had planted none?
Can any sit down idle in the house,

Nor hear appeals from Buonarroti's stone
 And Raffael's canvas, rousing and to rouse?
 Where's Poussin's master? Gallic Avignon
 Bred Laura, and Vancluse's fount has stirred
 The heart of France too strongly, as it lets
 Its little stream out (like a wizard's bird)
 Which bounds upon its emerald wing, and wets
 The rocks on each side), that she should not gird
 Her loins with Charlemagne's sword when foes beset
 The country of her Petrarch. Spain may well
 Be minded how from Italy she caught,
 To mingle with her tinkling Moorish bell,
 A fuller cadence and a subtler thought.
 And even the New World, the receptacle
 Of freemen, may send glad men, as it ought,
 To greet Vespucci Amerigo's door
 While England claims, by trump of poetry,
 Verona, Venice, the Ravenna-shore,
 And dearer holds John Milton's Fiesole
 Than Langlande's Malvern with the stars in flower.

And Vallombrosa, we two went to see
 Last June, beloved companion, where sublime
 The mountains live in holy families,
 And the slow pine-woods ever climb and climb
 Half up their breasts, just stagger as they seize
 Some gray crag, drop back with it many a time,
 And straggle blindly down the precipice.
 The Vallombrosan brooks were strewn as thick
 That June day, knee-deep with dead beechen leaves,
 As Milton saw them ere his heart grew sick,

And his eyes blind. I think the monks and beeves
 Are all the same too: scarce have they changed the wick
 On good St. Gualbert's altar which receives
 The convent's pilgrims; and the pool in front
 (Wherein the hill-stream trout are cast, to wait
 The beatific vision and the grunt Used at refectory) keeps its weedy state,
 To baffle saintly abbots who would count
 The fish across their breviary, nor 'bate
 The measure of their steps. O waterfalls
 And forests! sound and silence! mountains bare,
 That leap up peak by peak, and catch the palls
 Of purple and silver mist to rend and share
 With one another, at electric calls
 Of life in the sunbeams,—till we cannot dare
 Fix your shapes, count your number! we must think
 Your beauty and your glory helped to fill
 The cup of Milton's soul so to the brink,
 He nevermore was thirsty when God's will
 Had shattered to his sense the last chain-link
 By which he had drawn from Nature's visible
 The fresh well-water. Satisfied by this,
 He sang of Adam's paradise, and smiled,
 Remembering Vallombrosa. Therefore is
 The place divine to English man and child,
 And pilgrims leave their souls here in a kiss.

For Italy's the whole earth's treasury, piled
 With reveries of gentle ladies, hung
 Aside, like ravelled silk, from life's worn stuff;
 With coins of scholars' fancy, which, being rung

On workday counter, still sound silver-proof:
 In short, with all the dreams of dreamers young,
 Before their heads have time for slipping off
 Hope's pillow to the ground. How oft, indeed,
 We've sent our souls out from the rigid north,
 On bare white feet which would not print nor bleed,
 To climb the Alpine passes, and look forth,
 Where boomerang low the Lombard rivers lead
 To gardens, vineyards, all a dream is worth,—
 Sights thou and I, love, have seen afterward
 From Tuscan Bellosuardo, wide awake,¹
 When, standing on the actual blessed sward
 Where Galileo stood at nights to take
 The vision of the stars, we have found it hard,
 Gazing upon the earth and heaven, to make
 A choice of beauty.

Therefore let us all
 Refreshed in England or in other land,
 By visions, with their fountain rise and fall,
 Of this earth's darling,— we, who understand
 A little how the Tuscan musical Vowels do round themselves as if they planned
 Eternities of separate sweetness,— we,
 Who loved Sorrento vines in picture-book,
 Or ere in winecup we pledged faith or glee,—
 Who loved Rome's wolf with demigods at suck,
 Or ere we loved truth's own divinity,—
 Who loved, in brief, the classic hill and brook,
 And Ovid's dreaming tales and Petrarch's song,

¹ Galileo's villa, close to Florence, is built on an eminence called Bellosuardo.

Or e'er we loved Love's self even,— let us give
 The blessing of our souls (and wish them strong)
 To bear it to the height where prayers arrive,
 When faithful spirits pray against a wrong.)
 To this great cause of southern men who strive
 In God's name for man's rights, and shall not fail !
 Behold they shal not fail. The shouts ascend
 Above the shrieks, in Naples, and prevail.
 Rows of shot corpses, waiting for the end
 Of burial, seem to smile up straight and pale
 Into the azure air, and apprehend
 That final gun-flash from Palermo's coast
 Which lightens their apocalypse of death.
 So let them die ! The world shows nothing lost;
 Therefore not blood. Above or underneath,
 What matter, brothers, if ye keep your post
 On duty's side ? As sword returns to sheath,
 So dust to grave; but souls find place in heaven.
 Heroic daring is the true success,
 The eucharistic bread requires no leaven;
 And, though your ends were hopeless, we should bless
 Your cause as holy. Strive—and, having striven,
 Take for God's recompense that righteousness !

PART II.

I WROTE a meditation and a dream,
 Hearing a little child sing in the street:
 I leant upon his music as a theme,
 Till it gave way beneath my heart's full beat
 Which tried at an exultant prophecy,

But dropped before the measure
was complete—
Alas for songs and hearts! O Tus-
cany,
O Dante's Florence, is the type too
plain?
Didst thou, too, only sing of liberty,
As little children take up a high
strain
With unintended voices, and break
off
To sleep upon their mothers' knees
again?
Couldst thou not watch one hour?
then sleep enough,
That sleep may hasten manhood,
and sustain
The faint, pale spirit with some mus-
cular stuff.

But we who cannot slumber as thou
dost;
We thinkers, who have thought for
thee, and failed;
We hopers, who have hoped for
thee, and lost;
We poets, wandered round by
dreams,¹ who hailed
From this Atrides' roof (with lintel-
post
Which still drips blood,— the worse
part hath prevailed)
The fire-voice of the beacons to de-
clare
Troy taken, sorrow ended,— cozened
through
A crimson sunset in a misty air,
What now remains for such as we to
do?
God's judgments, peradventure,
will he bar
To the roots of thunder, if we kneel
and sue?

From Casa Guidi windows I looked
forth,
And saw ten thousand eyes of Flor-
entines
Flash back the triumph of the Lom-
bard north,—
Saw fifty banners, freighted with the
signs
And exultations of the awakened
earth,
Float on above the multitude in lines,

¹ See the opening passage of the Agamem-
non of Aeschylus.

Straight to the Pitti. So, the vision
went.
And so, between those populous rough
hands
Raised in the sun, Duke Leopold
outleant,
And took the patriot's oath which
henceforth stands
Among the oaths of perjurors, emi-
nent
To catch the lightnings ripened for
these lands.
Why swear at all, thou false Duke
Leopold?
What need to swear? What need to
boast thy blood
Unspoilt of Austria, and thy heart
unsold
Away from Florence? It was under-
stood
God made thee not too vigorous or
too bold;
And men had patience with thy quiet
mood,
And women pity, as they saw thee
pace
Their festive streets with premature
gray hairs.
We turned the mild dejection of thy
face
To princely meanings, took thy wrin-
kling cares
For ruffling hopes, and called thee
weak, not base.
Nay, better light the torches for more
prayers,
And smoke the pale Madonnas at
the shrine,—
Being still "our poor Grand-duke,
our good Grand-duke,
Who cannot help the Austrian in
his line,"—
Than write an oath upon a nation's
book
For men to spit at with scorn's
blurring brine!
Who dares forgive what none can
overlook?

For me, I do repent me in this
dust
Of towns and temples which makes
Italy;
I sigh amid the sighs which breathe
a gust
Of dying century to century
Around us on the uneven crater-
crust

Of these old worlds; I bow my soul
and knee.
Absolve me, patriots, of my wo-
man's fault
That ever I believed the man was
true!
These sceptred strangers shun the
common salt,
And therefore, when the general
board's in view,
And they stand up to carve for
blind and halt,
The wise suspect the viands which
ensue.
I much repent, that in this time
and place,
Where many corpse-lights of experi-
ence burn
From Caesar's and Lorenzo's fester-
ing race,
To enlighten groping reasoners, I
could learn
No better counsel for a simple case
Than to put faith in princes, in my
turn.
Had all the death-piles of the an-
cient years
Flared up in vain before me? knew
I not
What stench arises from some purple
gears?
And how the sceptres witness whence
they got
Their brier-wood, crackling through
the atmosphere's
Foul smoke, by princely perjuries
kept hot?
Forgive me, ghosts of patriots,—
Brutus, thou
Who trailest down hill into life again
Thy blood-weighted cloak, to indict
me with thy slow,
Reproachful eyes! — for being taught
in vain,
That, while the illegitimate Cesars
show
Of meaner stature than the first full
strain
(Confessed incompetent to conquer
Gaul.)
They swoon as feebly, and cross Ru-
bieons
As rashly, as any Julius of them
all!
Forgive, that I forgot the mind which
runs
Through absolute races, too unscep-
tical!
I saw the man among his little sons,

His lips were warm with kisses
while he swore;
And I, because I am a woman, I,
Who felt my own child's coming
life before
The prescience of my soul, and held
faith high,—
I could not bear to think, whoever
bore,
That lips so warmed could shape so
cold a lie.
From Casa Guidi windows I looked
out,
Again looked, and beheld a different
sight.
The Duke had fled before the peo-
ple's shout
“Long live the Duke!” A people, to
speak right,
Must speak as soft as courtiers, lest
a doubt
Should curdle brows of gracious sov-
ereigns white.
Moreover, that same dangerous
shouting meant
Some gratitude for future favors
which
Were only promised, the Constitu-
ent
Implied; the whole being subject to
the hitch
In “motu proprios,” very incli-
gent
To all these Czars, from Paul to Paulo-
vitch.
Whereat the people rose up in the
dust
Of the ruler's flying feet, and shouted
still
And loudly; only, this time, as was
just,
Not “Live the Duke!” who had fled
for good or ill,
But “Live the People!” who re-
mained and must,
The unrenounced and unrenouncea-
ble.
Long live the people! How they
lived! and boiled
And bubbled in the caldron of the
street!
How the young blustered, nor the
old recoiled!
And what a thunderous stir of tongues
and feet
Trod flat the palpitating bells, and
foiled

The joy-guns of their echo, shattering it!
 How down they pulled the Duke's arms everywhere!
 How up they set new café-signs, to show
 Where patriots might sip ices in pure air!
 (The fresh paint smelling somewhat.) To and fro
 How marched the civic guard, and stopped to stare
 When boys broke windows in a civic glow!
 How rebel songs were sung to loyal tunes,
 And bishops cursed in ecclesiastic metres!
 How all the Circoli grew large as moons,
 And all the speakers, moonstruck,—thankful greeters
 Of prospects which struck poor the ducal boons,
 A mere free Press and Chambers! frank repeaters
 Of great Guerazzi's praises—
 "There's a man,
 The father of the land, who, truly great,
 Takes off that national disgrace and ban,
 The farthing-tax upon our Florence-gate,
 And saves Italia as he only can!"
 How all the nobles fled, and would not wait,
 Because they were most noble! which being so,
 How liberals vowed to burn their palaces,
 Because free Tuscans were not free to go!
 How grown men raged at Austria's wickedness,
 And smoked, while fifty striplings in a row
 Marched straight to Piedmont for the wrong's redress!
 You say we failed in duty,—we who wore
 Black velvet like Italian democrats,
 Who slashed our sleeves like patriots, nor forswore
 The true republic in the form of hats?
 We chased the archbishop from the Duomo-door,
 We chalked the walls with bloody caveats

Against all tyrants. If we did not fight
 Exactly, we fired muskets up the air
 To show that victory was ours of right.
 We met, had free discussion everywhere
 (Except, perhaps, i' the Chambers) day and night.
 We proved the poor should be employed . . . that's fair,—
 And yet the rich not worked for anywise,—
 Pay certified, yet payers abrogated,
 Full work secured, yet liabilities
 To overwork excluded,—not one bated
 Of all our holidays, that still, at twice
 Or thrice a week, are moderately rated.
 We proved that Austria was dislodged, or would
 Or should be, and that Tuscany in arms
 Should, would, dislodge her, ending the old feud;
 And yet to leave our piazzas, shops, and farms,
 For the simple sake of fighting, was not good—
 We proved that also. "Did we carry charms
 Against being killed ourselves, that we should rush
 On killing others? what, desert here-with
 Our wives and mothers?—was that duty? Tush!"
 At which we shook the sword within the sheath
 Like heroes, only louder; and the flush
 Ran up the cheek to meet the future wreath.
 Nay, what we proved, we shouted
 —how we shouted!
 (Especially the boys did), boldly planting
 That tree of liberty, whose fruit is doubted,
 Because the roots are not of Nature's granting.
 A tree of good and evil: none, without it,
 Grow gods; alas! and, with it, men are wanting.

O holy knowledge, holy liberty!
 O holy rights of nations! If I speak
 These bitter things against the jug-
 gery
 Of days that in your names proved
 blind and weak,
 It is that tears are bitter. When we see
 The brown skulls grin at death in
 churchyards bleak,
 We do not cry, "This Yorick is too light,"
 For death grows deathlier with that
 mouth he makes.
 So with my mocking. Bitter things I write
 Because my soul is bitter for your sakes,
 O freedom! O my Florence!

Men who might
 Do greatly in a universe that breaks
 And burns, must ever know before
 they do.
 Courage and patience are but sacrifice;
 And sacrifice is offered for and to
 Something conceived of. Each man pays a price
 For what himself counts precious,
 whether true
 Or false the appreciation it implies.
 But here, — no knowledge, no conception, nought!
 Desire was absent, that provides
 great deeds
 From out the greatness of prevent-
 ient thought;
 And action, action, like a flame that
 needs
 A steady breath and fuel, being
 caught
 Up, like a burning reed from other
 reeds,
 Flashed in the empty and uncer-
 tain air,
 Then wavered, then went out. Be-
 hold, who blames
 A crooked course, when not a goal
 is there
 To round the fervid striving of the
 games?
 An ignorance of means may minis-
 ter
 To greatness; but an ignorance of
 aims
 Makes it impossible to be great at all.

So with our Tuscans. Let none dare
 to say,
 "Here virtue never can be nation-
 al;"
 Here fortitude can never cut a way
 Between the Austrian muskets, out
 of thrall:
 I tell you rather, that whoever may
 Discern true ends here shall grow
 pure enough
 To love them, brave enough to strive
 for them,
 And strong to reach them, though
 the roads be rough:
 That, having learnt — by no mere
 apothegm —
 Not just the draping of a graceful
 stuff
 About a statue, broidered at the
 hem, —
 Not just the trilling on an opera-
 stage,
 Of "libertà" to bravos — (a fair word,
 Yet too allied to inarticulate rage
 And breathless sobs, for singing,
 though the chord
 Were deeper than they struck it !)
 but the gaule
 Of civil wants sustained, and wrongs
 abhorred,
 The serious, sacred meaning and
 full use
 Of freedom for a nation, — then, in-
 deed,
 Our Tuscans, underneath the bloody
 dews
 Of some new morning, rising up
 agreed
 And bold, will want no Saxon souls
 or thews
 To sweep their piazzas clear of Aus-
 tria's breed.
 Alas, alas! it was not so this
 time.
 Conviction was not, courage failed,
 and truth
 Was something to be doubted of.
 The mime
 Changed masks, because a mime.
 The tide as smooth
 In running in as out, no sense of
 crime
 Because no sense of virtue. Sudden
 ruth
 Seized on the people: they would
 have again
 Their good Grand-duke, and leave
 Guerazzi, though

He took that tax from Florence.
"Much in vain
He takes it from the market-carts, we
trow,
While urgent that no market-men
remain,
But all march off, and leave the spade
and plough
To die among the Lombards. Was
it thus
The dear paternal Duke did? Live
the Duke!"
At which the joy-bells multitudi-
nous,
Swept by an opposite wind, as loudly
shook.
Call back the mild archbishop to
his house,
To bless the people with his fright-
ened look,—
He shall not yet be hanged, you
comprehend!
Seize on Guerazzi; guard him in full
view,
Or else we stab him in the back to
end!
Rub out those chalked devices, set up
new
The Duke's arms, doff your Phry-
gian caps, and mend
The pavement of the piazzas broke into
By barren poles of freedom: smooth
the way
For the ducal carriage, lest his High-
ness sigh,
"Here trees of liberty grew yester-
day!"
"Long live the Duke!" How roared
the cannonry!
How rocked the bell-towers! and
through thickening spray
Of nosegays, wreaths, and kerchiefs
tossed on high,
How marched the civic guard, the
people still
Being good at shouts, especially the
boys!
Alas, poor people, of an unfledged
will
Most fitly expressed by such a callow
voice!
Alas, still poorer Duke, incapable
Of being worthy even of so much
noise!
You think he came back instantly,
with thanks,
And tears in his faint eyes, and hands
extended

To stretch the franchise through
their utmost ranks?
That having, like a father appre-
hended,
He came to pardon fatherly those
pranks
Played out, and now in filial service
ended?
That some love-token, like a prince,
he threw
To meet the people's love-call in re-
turn?
Well, how he came I will relate to
you;
And if your hearts should burn—
why, hearts *must* burn,
To make the ashes which things
old and new
Shall be washed clean in—as this
Duke will learn.
From Casa Guidi windows gazing,
then,
I saw and witness how the Duke
came back.
The regular tramp of horse, and
tread of men,
Did smite the silence like an anvil
black
And sparkless. With her wide
eyes at full strain,
Our Tuscan nurse exclaimed, "Alack,
alack,
Signora! these shall be the Austr-
ians"—"Nay,
Be still," I answered; "do not wake
the child!"
—For so, my two-months' baby
sleeping lay
In milky dreams upon the bed, and
smiled,
And I thought, "He shall sleep on,
while he may,
Through the world's baseness: not
being yet defiled,
Why should he be disturbed by
what is done?"
Then, gazing, I beheld the long-drawn
street
Live out, from end to end, full in
the sun,
With Austria's thousand; sword and
bayonet,
Horse, foot, artillery, cannons roll-
ing on
Like blind, slow storm-clouds gestant
with the heat
Of undeveloped lightnings, each
bestrode

By a single man, dust-white from head to heel,
Indifferent as the dreadful thing he rode,
Like a sculptured Fate serene and terrible.
As some smooth river which has overflowed,
Will slow and silent down its current wheel
A loosened forest, all the pines erect,
So swept, in mute significance of storm,
The marshalled thousands; not an eye defect
To left or right, to catch a novel form
Of Florence city adorned by architect
And carver, or of beauties live and warm
Scared at the casements,—all, straightforward eyes
And faces, held as steadfast as their swords,
And cognizant of acts, not images.
The key, O Tuscans, too well fits the wards!
Ye asked for mimes,—these bring you tragedies;
For purple,—these shall wear it as your lords.
Ye played like children,—die like innocents.
Ye mimicked lightnings with a torch,—the crack
Of the actual bolt, your pastime circumvents.
Ye called up ghosts, believing they were slack
To follow any voice from Gilboa's tents.
Here's Samuel! — and so, Grand-dukes come back!
And yet they are no prophets, though they come:
That awful mantle they are drawing close
Shall be searched one day by the shafts of doom
Through double folds now hoodwinking the brows.
Resuscitated monarchs disentomb
Grave-reptiles with them in their new life-throats.
Let such beware. Behold, the people waits,

Like God: as he, in his serene of might,
So they, in their endurance of long straits.
Ye stamp no nation out, though day and night
Ye tread them with that absolute heel which grates
And grinds them flat from all attempted height.
You kill worms sooner with a garden spade
Than you kill peoples: peoples will not die;
The tail curls stronger when you lop the head:
They writhe at every wound, and multiply
And shudder into a heap of life that's made
Thus vital from God's own vitality.
'Tis hard to shrivel back a day of God's
Once fixed for judgment; 'tis as hard to change
The peoples when they rise beneath their loads,
And heave them from their backs with violent wrench
To crush the oppressor: for that judgment-rod's
The measure of this popular revenge.
Meanwhile, from Casa Guidi windows, we behold the armament of Austria flow
Into the drowning heart of Tuscany;
And yet none wept, none cursed, or, if 'twas so,
They wept and cursed in silence. Silently
Our noisy Tuscans watched the invading foe;
They had learnt silence. Pressed against the wall,
And grouped upon the church-steps opposite,
A few pale men and women stared at all.
God knows what they were feeling, with their white
Constrained faces,—they, so prodigal
Of cry and gesture when the world goes right,
Or wrong indeed. But here was depth of wrong,

And here, still water: they were silent here;
 And through that sentient silence struck along
 That measured tramp from which it stood out clear,
 Distinct the sound and silence, like a gong
 At midnight, each by the other awfulester,—
 While every soldier in his cap displayed
 A leaf of olive. Dusty, bitter thing!
 Was such plucked at Novara, is it said ?

A cry is up in England, which doth ring
 The hollow world through, that for ends of trade
 And virtue, and God's better worshipping.
 We henceforth should exalt the name of Peace,
 And leave those rusty wars that eat the soul,—
 Besides their clippings at our golden fleece.
 I, too, have loved peace, and from hole to hole
 Of immemorial undeciduous trees Would write, as lovers use upon a scroll,
 The holy name of Peace, and set it high
 Where none could pluck it down. On trees, I say,
 Not upon gibbets! — With the greenery
 Of dewy branches and the flowery May,
 Sweet mediation betwixt earth and sky
 Providing, for the shepherd's holiday.
 Not upon gibbets! though the vulture leaves
 The bones to quiet, which he first picked bare.
 Not upon dungeons! though the wretch who grieves
 And groans within, less stirs the outer air
 Than any little field-mouse stirs the sheaves.
 Not upon chain-bolts! though the slave's despair
 Has dulled his helpless miserable brain,

And left him blank beneath the free-man's whip
 To sing and laugh out idiocies of pain.
 Nor yet on starving homes! where many a lip
 Has sobbed itself asleep through curses vain.
 I love no peace which is not fellowship,
 And which includes not mercy. I would have
 Rather the raking of the guns across
 The world, and shrieks against heaven's architrave;
 Rather the struggle in the slippery fosse
 Of dying men and horses, and the wave
 Blood-bubbling. . . . Enough said ! — by Christ's own cross,
 And by this faint heart of my womanhood,
 Such things are better than a Peace that sits
 Beside a hearth in self-commended mood,
 And takes no thought how wind and rain by fits
 Are howling out of doors against the good
 Of the poor wanderer. What! your peace admits
 Of outside anguish while it keeps at home?
 I loathe to take its name upon my tongue.
 'Tis nowise peace: 'tis treason, stiff with doom;
 'Tis gagged despair, and inarticulate wrong,
 Annihilated Poland, stifled Rome,
 Dazed Naples, Hungary fainting 'neath the thong,
 And Austria wearing a smooth olive-leaf
 On her brute forehead, while her hoofs outpress
 The life from these Italian souls in brief.
 O Lord of peace, who art Lord of righteousness,
 Constrain the anguished worlds from sin and grief,
 Pierce them with conscience, purge them with redress,
 And give us peace which is no counterfeit!

But wherefore should we look out
any more

From Casa Guidi windows? Shut
them straight,

And let us sit down by the folded door,
And veil our saddened faces, and so
wait

What next the judgment-heavens
make ready for.

I have grown too weary of these
windows. Sights

Come thick enough and clear enough
in thought,

Without the sunshine: souls have
inner lights.

And since the Grand-duke has come
back, and brought

This army of the North which thus
requires

His filial South, we leave him to be
taught.

His South, too, has learnt something
certainly,

Whereof the practice will bring profit
soon;

And peradventure other eyes may
see,

From Casa Guidi windows, what is
done

Or undone. Whatsoever deeds they
be,

Pope Pius will be glorified in none.

Record that gain, Mazzini! It shall
top

Some heights of sorrow. Peter's rock,
so named,

Shall lure no vessel any more to
drop

Among the breakers. Peter's chair is
shamed,

Like any vulgar throne the nations
lop

To pieces for their firewood unre-
claimed;

And when it burns, too, we shall
see as well

In Italy as elsewhere. Let it burn.

The cross accounted still adorable
Is Christ's cross only! If the thief's
would earn

Some stealthy genuflexions, we re-
bel;

And here the impenitent thief's has
had its turn,

As God knows; and the people on
their knees

Scoff, and toss back the crosiers
stretched like yokes

To press their heads down lower by
degrees.

So Italy, by means of these last
strokes,

Escapes the danger which preceded
these,

Of leaving captured hands in cloven
oaks,—

Of leaving very souls within the
buckle

Whence bodies struggled outward,—
of supposing

That freemen may like bondsmen
kneel and truckle,

And then stand up as usual, without
losing

An inch of stature.

Those whom she-wolves suckle
Will bite as wolves do in the grapple-

closing

Of adverse interests. This at last is
known,

(Thank Pius for the lesson) that albeit
Among the Popedom's hundred

heads of stone

Which blink down on you from the
roof's retreat

In Siena's tiger-striped cathedral,
Joan

And Borgia 'mid their fellows you may
greet,

A harlot and a devil,—you will see
Not a man, still less angel, grandly

set

With open soul to render man more
free.

The fishers are still thinking of the
net,

And, if not thinking of the hook
too, we

Are counted somewhat deeply in their

debt;

But that's a rare case—so, by hook
and crook,

They take the advantage, agonizing
Christ

By rustier nails than those of Ce-
dron's brook,

I' the people's body very cheaply
priced,—

And quote high priesthood out of
Holy hook,

While buying death-fields with the
sacrificed.

Priests, priests,—there's no such
name!—God's own, except
Ye take most vainly. Through hea-
ven's lifted gate

The priestly ephod in sole glory
swept
When Christ ascended, entered in,
and sate
(With victor face sublimely over-
wept)
At Deity's right hand to mediate,
He alone, he forever. On his breast
The Urin and the Thummim, fed with
fire
From the full Godhead, flicker with
the unrest
Of human pitiful heart beats. Come
up higher,
All Christians. Levi's tribe is dis-
possest.
That solitary alb ye shall admire,
But not east lots for. The last
chrism, poured right,
Was on that Head, and poured for
burial,
And not for domination in men's
sight.
What are these churches? The old
temple wall
Doth overlook them juggling with
the sleight
Of surplice, candlestick, and altar-
pall:
East church and west church, ay,
north church and south,
Rome's church and England's — let
them all repent,
And make concordats 'twixt their
soul and mouth,
Succeed St. Paul by working at the
tent,
Become infallible guides by speak-
ing truth,
And excommunicate their pride that
bent
And cramped the souls of men.
Why, even here,
Priestcraft burns out, the twined
linen blazes;
Not, like asbestos, to grow white
and clear,
But all to perish! while the fire-
smell raises
To life some swooning spirits, who
last year
Lost breath and heart in these church-
stifled places.
Why, almost through this Pius, we
believed
The priesthood could be an honest
thing, he smiled
So saintly while our corn was being
sheaved

For his own granaries! Showing
now defiled
His hireling hands, a better help's
achieved
Than if they blessed us shepherd-like
and mild.
False doctrine, strangled by its own
amen,
Dies in the throat of all this nation.
Who
Will speak a pope's name as they
rise again?
What woman or what child will count
him true?
What dreamer praise him with the
voice or pen?
What man fight for him? — Pius takes
his due.
Record that gain, Mazzini! — Yes,
but first
Set down thy people's faults; set down
the want
Of soul-conviction; set down aims
dispersed,
And incoherent means, and valor
scant
Because of scanty faith, and schisms
accursed
That wrench these brother-hearts
from covenant
With freedom and each other. Set
down this,
And this, and see to overcome it
when
The seasons bring the fruits thou
wilt not miss
If wary. Let no cry of patriot
men
Distract thee from the stern analy-
sis
Of masses who cry only! keep thy
ken
Clear as thy soul is virtuous. He-
roes' blood
Splashed up against thy noble brow
in Rome;
Let such not blind thee to an inter-
lude
Which was not also holy, yet did
come
'Twixt sacramental actions, — broth-
erhood
Despised even there, and something
of the doom
Of Remus in the trenches. Listen
now —
Rossi died silent near where Cæsar
died.

He did not say, "My Brutus, is it thou?"
 But Italy unquestioned testified,
 "I killed him! I am Brutus.—I avow."
 At which the whole world's laugh of scorn replied,
 "A poor maimed copy of Brutus!"
 Too much like, indeed, to be so unlike! too unskilled
 At Philippi and the honest battle-pike;
 To be so skilful where a man is killed
 Near Pompey's statue, and the daggers strike
 At unawares i' the throat. Was thus fulfilled
 An omen once of Michel Angelo?—
 When Marcus Brutus he conceived complete,
 And strove to hurl him out by blow on blow
 Upon the marble, at Art's thunder-heat,
 Till haply (some pre-shadow rising slow)
 Of what his Italy would fancy meet
 To be called BRUTUS) straight his plastic hand
 Fell back before his prophet-soul, and left
 A fragment, a maimed Brutus,—but more grand
 Than this, so named at Rome, was!
 Let thy west Present one woof and warp, Mazzini! Stand
 With no man hankering for a dagger's heft,
 No, not for Italy!—nor stand apart,
 No, not for the Republic!—from those pure
 Brave men who hold the level of thy heart
 In patriot truth, as lover and as doer,
 Albeit they will not follow where thou art
 As extreme theorist. Trust and distrust fewer,
 And so bind strong, and keep unstained the cause
 Which (God's sign granted) war-trumps newly blown
 Shall yet annunciate to the world's applause.

But now, the world is busy: it has grown
 A Fair-going world. Imperial England draws
 The flowing ends of the earth from Fez, Canton,
 Delhi, and Stockholm, Athens and Madrid,
 The Russias and the vast Americas,
 As if a queen drew in her robes amid
 Her golden cincture,—isles, peninsulas,
 Capes, continents, far inland countries hid
 By jasper-sands and hills of chrysopras,
 All trailing in their splendors through the door
 Of the gorgeous Crystal Palace.
 Every nation, to every other nation strange of yore,
 Gives face to face the civic salutation,
 And holds up in a proud right hand before
 That congress the best work which she can fashion
 By her best means. "These corals, will you please
 To match against your oaks? They grow as fast
 Within my wilderness of purple seas."—
 "This diamond stared upon me as I passed
 (As a live god's eye from a marble frieze)
 Along a dark of diamonds. Is it classed?"—
 "I wove these stuffs so subtly that the gold
 Swims to the surface of the silk like cream
 And curdles to fair patterns. Ye behold!"—
 "These delicatest muslins rather seem
 Than be, you think? Nay, touch them and be bold,
 Though such veiled Chakhi's face in Hafiz' dream."—
 "These carpets—you walk slow on them like kings,
 Inaudible like spirits, while your foot
 Dips deep in velvet roses and such things."—

"Even Apollonius might commend
this flute;¹
The music, winding through the
stops, upsprings
To make the player very rich: compute!"
"Here's goblet-glass, to take in
with your wine
The very sun its grapes were ripened
under:
Drink light and juice together, and
each fine."—
"This model of a steam-ship moves
your wonder?
You should behold it crushing down
the brine
Like a blind Jove, who feels his way
with thunder."—
"Here's sculpture! Ah, we live
too! why not throw
Our life into our marbles? Art has
place
For other artists after Angelo."—
"I tried to paint out here a natural
face;
For nature includes Raffael, as we
know,
Not Raffael nature. Will it help my
case?"—
"Methinks you will not match this
steel of ours!"—
"Nor you this porcelain! One might
dream the clay
Retained in it the larvae of the
flowers,
They bud so round the cup, the old
spring-way."—
"Nor you these carven woods,
where birds in bowers
With twisting snakes and climbing
cupids play."

O Magi of the east and of the west,
Your incense, gold, and myrrh are
excellent!—
What gifts for Christ, then, bring
ye with the rest?
Your hands have worked well: is
your courage spent
In handwork only? Have you
nothing best,
Which generous souls may perfect
and present,

¹ Philostratus relates of Apollonius, how he objected to the musical instrument of Linus the Rhodian, that it could not enrich or beautify. The history of music in our day would satisfy the philosopher on one point at least.

And He shall thank the givers for?
no light
Of teaching, liberal nations, for the
poor
Who sit in darkness when it is not
night?
No cure for wicked children? Christ
—no cure!
No help for women sobbing out of
sight
Because men made the laws? no
brothel-lure
Burnt out by popular lightnings?
Hast thou found
No remedy, my England, for such
woes?
No outlet, Austria, for the scourged
and bound,
No entrance for the exiled? no re-
pose,
Russia, for knouted Poles worked
underground,
And gentle ladies bleached among
the snows?
No mercy for the slave, America?
No hope for Rome, free France, chi-
valric France?
Alas, great nations have great
shaines, I say.
No pity, O world, no tender utter-
ance
Of benediction, and prayers
stretched this way
For poor Italia, baffled by mischance?
O gracious nations, give some ear
to me!
You all go to your Fair, and I am one
Who at the roadside of humanity
Beseech your alms,—God's justice to
be done.
So, prosper!

In the name of Italy,
Meantime her patriot dead have beni-
son.
They only have done well; and,
what they did
Being perfect, it shall triumph. Let
them slumber:
No king of Egypt in a pyramid
Is safer from oblivion, though he
number
Full seventy ceremonys for a cover-
lid.
These dead be seeds of life, and shall
encumber
The sad heart of the land until it
loose
The clammy clods, and let out the
spring-growth

In beatific green through every bruise.
The tyrant should take heed to what he doth,
Since every victim-carrion turns to use,
And drives a chariot, like a god made wroth,
Against each piled injustice. Ay, the least,
Dead for Italia, not in vain has died;
Though many vainly, ere life's struggle ceased,
To mad dissimilar ends have swerved aside;
Each grave her nationality has pieced
By its own majestic breadth, and fortified,
And pinned it deeper to the soil.
Forlorn
Of thanks be, therefore, no one of these graves !
Not hers,—who, at her husband's side, in scorn,
Outfaced the whistling shot and hissing waves,
Until she felt her little babe unborn Recoil, within her, from the violent staves
And bloodhounds of the world: at which her life
Dropt inwards from her eyes, and followed it
Beyond the hunters. Garibaldi's wife
And child died so. And now the seaweeds fit
Her body, like a proper shroud and coif,
And murinuously the ebbing waters grit
The little pebbles while she lies interred
In the sea-sand. Perhaps, ere dying thus,
She looked up in his face (which never stirred
From its clinched anguish) as to make excuse
For leaving him for his, if so she erred.
He well remembers that she could not choose.
A memorable grave ! Another is
At Genoa. There a king may fitly lie,
Who, bursting that heroic heart of his

At last Novara, that he could not die,
(Though thrice into the cannon's eyes for this
He plunged his shuddering steed, and felt the sky
Reel back between the fire-shocks) stripped away
The ancestral ermine ere the smoke had cleared,
And, naked to the soul, that none might say
His kingship covered what was base and billeted
With treason, went out straight an exile, yea,
An exiled patriot. Let him be revered.
Yea, verily, Charles Albert has died well;
And if he lived not all so, as one spoke,
The sin pass softly with the passing-bell:
For he was shriven, I think, in cannon-smoke,
And, taking off his crown, made visible
A hero's forehead. Shaking Austria's yoke,
He shattered his own hand and heart. "So best,"
His last words were upon his lonely bed,
I do not end like popes and dukes at least—
"Thank God for it." And now that he is dead,
Admitting it is proved and manifest
That he was worthy, with a dis-crowned head,
To measure heights with patriots, let them stand
Beside the man in his Oporto shroud,
And each vouchsafe to take him by the hand,
And kiss him on the cheek, and say aloud,
"Thou, too, hast suffered for our native land !
My brother, thou art one of us ! be proud."
Still, graves, when Italy is talked upon.
Still, still, the patriot's tomb, the stranger's hate.

Still Niobe ! still fainting in the sun,
By whose most dazzling arrows violate
Her beauteous offspring perished !
has she won
Nothing but garlands for the graves,
from Fate ?
Nothing but death-songs ? Yes, be it understood.
Life throbs in noble Piedmont ! while the feet
Of Rome's clay image, dabbled soft in blood,
Grow flat with dissolution, and, as meet,
Will soon be shovelled off like other mud.
To leave the passage free in church and street.
And I, who first took hope up in this song,
Because a child was singing one . . . behold,
The hope and omen were not, happily, wrong !
Poets are soothsayers still, like those of old
Who studied flights of doves; and creatures young
And tender, mighty meanings may unfold.

The sun strikes through the windows, up the floor;
Stand out in it, my own young Florentine,
Not two years old, and let me see thee more !
It grows along thy amber curls, to shine
Brighter than elsewhere. Now, look straight before,
And fix thy brave blue English eyes on mine,
And from my soul, which fronts the future so,
With unabashed and unabated gaze,
Teach me to hope for, what the angels know
When they smile clear as thou dost,
Down God's ways
With just alighted feet, between the snow
And snowdrops, where a little lamb may graze,
Thou hast no fear, my lamb, about the road,

Albeit in our vain-glory we assume That, less than we have, thou hast learnt of God,
Stand out, my blue-eyed prophet ! — thou to whom The earliest world-day light that ever flowed,
Through Casa Guidi windows chanced to come !
Now shake the glittering nimbus of thy hair,
And be God's witness that the elemental New springs of life are gushing everywhere
To cleanse the water-courses, and prevent all Concrete obstructions which infest the air !
That earth's alive, and gentle or ungentle Motions within her signify but growth ! —
The ground swells greenest o'er the laboring moles.
Howe'er the uneasy world is vexed and wroth,
Young children, lifted high on parent souls,
Look round them with a smile upon the mouth,
And take for music every bell that tolls ;
(Who said we should be better if like these ?)
But we sit murmuring for the future, though Posterity is smiling on our knees,
Convicting us of folly. Let us go — We will trust God. The blank interstices Men take for ruins, he will build into With pillared marbles rare, or knit across With generous arches, till the fane's complete.
This world has no perdition, if some loss.
Such cheer I gather from thy smiling, sweet !
The selfsame cherub-faces which emboss The Veil, lean inward to the Mercy-seat.

POEMS BEFORE CONGRESS.

NAPOLEON III. IN ITALY.

I.

EMPEROR, Emperor !
From the centre to the shore,
From the Seine back to the Rhine,
Stood eight millions up and swore
By their manhood's right divine
So to elect and legislate,
This man should renew the line
Broken in a strain of fate,
And leagued' kings at Waterloo,
When the people's hands let go.
Emperor
Evermore.

II. . .

With a universal shout
They took the old regalia out
From an open grave that day,—
From a grave that would not close,
Where the first Napoleon lay
Expectant in repose,
As still as Merlin, with his conquer-
ing face
Turned up in its unquenchable ap-
peal
To men and heroes of the advancing
race,
Prepared to set the seal
Of what has been on what shall be.
Emperor
Evermore.

III.

The thinkers stood aside
To let the nation act.
Some hated the new-constituted fact
Of empire, as pride treading on their
pride.
Some quailed, lest what was poison-
ous in the past
Should graft itself in that Druidic
bough
On this green Now.
Some cursed, because at last
The open heavens, to which they had
looked in vain
For many a golden fall of marvellous
rain,

Were closed in brass; and some
Wept on, because a gone thing could
not come;
And some were silent, doubting all
things for
That popular conviction, — evermore
Emperor.

IV.

That day I did not hate,
Nor doubt, nor quail, nor curse.
I, reverencing the people, did not
bate
My reverence of their deed and ora-
cle,
Nor vainly prate
Of better and of worse
Against the great conclusion of their
will.
And yet, O voice and verse !
Which God set in me to acclaim and
sing
Conviction, exaltation, aspiration,
We gave no music to the patent thing,
Nor spared a holy rhythm to throb
and swim
About the name of him
Translated to the sphere of domina-
tion

By democratic passion.
I was not used, at least,
Nor can be, now or then,
To stroke the ermine beast
On any kind of throne
(Though builded by a nation for its
own),
And swell the surging choir for kings
of men,—
“Emperor
Evermore.”

V.

But now, Napoleon, now,
That, leaving far behind the purple
throne
Of vulgar monarchs, thou
Tread'st higher in thy deed
Than stair of throne can lead,

To help in the hour of wrong
 The broken hearts of nations to be
 strong, —
 Now, lifted as thou art
 To the level of pure song,
 We stand to meet thee on these Al-
 pine snows.
 And while the palpitating peaks
 break out
 Ecstatic from somnambular repose,
 With answers to the presence and
 the shout,
 We, poets of the people, who take
 part
 With elemental justice, natural
 right,
 Join in our echoes also, nor refrain.
 We meet thee, O Napoleon ! at this
 height
 At last, and find thee great enough to
 praise.
 Receive the poet's chrism, which
 smells beyond
 The priest's, and pass thy ways:
 An English poet warns thee to main-
 tain
 God's word, not England's: let his
 truth be true
 And all men liars ! with his truth
 respond
 To all men's lie. Exalt the sword,
 and smite
 On that long anvil of the Apennine
 Where Austria forged the Italian
 chain in view
 Of seven consenting nations, sparks
 of fine
 Admonitory light,
 Till men's eyes wink before convic-
 tions new.
 Flash in God's justice to the world's
 amaze,
 Sublime Deliverer ! after many days
 Found worthy of the deed thou art
 come to do —
 Emperor
 Evermore.

VI.

But Italy, my Italy,
 Can it last — this gleam ?
 Can she live and be strong,
 Or is it another dream,
 Like the rest we have dreamed so
 long ?
 And shall it, must it, be,
 That, after the battle-cloud has bro-
 ken,

She will die off again
 Like the rain,
 Or like a poet's song
 Sung of her, sad at the end,
 Because her name is Italy, —
 Die, and count no friend ?
 Is it true, may it be spoken,
 That she who has lain so still,
 With a wound in her breast,
 And a flower in her hand,
 And a gravestone under her head,
 While every nation at will
 Beside her has dared to stand,
 And flout her with pity and scorn,
 Saying, " She is at rest,
 She is fair, she is dead,
 And, leaving room in her stead
 To Us who are later born,
 This is certainly best ! "
 Saying, " Alas, she is fair,
 Very fair, but dead: give place,
 And so we have room for the race."
 — Can it be true, be true,
 That she lives anew ?
 That she rises up at the shout of her
 sons,
 At the trumpet of France,
 And lives anew ? Is it true
 That she has not moved in a
 trance,
 As in Forty-eight ?
 When her eyes were troubled with
 blood
 Till she knew not friend from foe,
 Till her hand was caught in a strait
 Of her cerement, and baffled so
 From doing the deed she would;
 And her weak foot stumbled across
 The grave of a king,
 And down she dropt at heavy loss
 And we gloomily covered her face,
 and said,
 " We have dreamed the thing:
 She is not alive, but dead."

VII.

Now, shall we say
 Our Italy lives indeed ?
 And, if it were not for the beat and
 bray
 Of drum and trump of martial men,
 Should we feel the underground heave
 and strain,
 Where heroes left their dust as a
 seed
 Sure to emerge one day ?
 And, if it were not for the rhythmic
 march

Of France and Piedmont's double hosts,
Should we hear the ghosts
Thrill through ruined aisle and arch,
Throb along the frescoed wall,
Whisper an oath by that divine
They left in picture, book, and stone,
That Italy is not dead at all?
Ay, if it were not for the tears in our eyes,—
These tears of a sudden passionate joy—
Should we see her arise
From the place where the wicked are overthrown,
Italy, Italy? loosed at length
From the tyrant's thrall,
Pale and calm in her strength?
Pale as the silver cross of Savoy
When the hand that bears the flag is brave,
And not a breath is stirring, save
What is blown
Over the war-trump's lip of brass,
Ere Garibaldi forces the pass!

VIII.

Ay, it is so, even so.
Ay, and it shall be so.
Each broken stone that long ago
She flung behind her as she went
In discouragement and bewilderment
Through the cairns of Time, and missed her way
Between to-day and yesterday,
Up springs a living man.
And each man stands with his face in the light
Of his own drawn sword,
Ready to do what a hero can.
Wall to sap, or river to ford,
Cannon to front, or foe to pursue,—
Still ready to do, and sworn to be true,
As a man and a patriot can.
Piedmontese, Neapolitan,
Lombard, Tuscan, Romagnole,—
Each man's body having a soul,—
Count how many they stand,
All of them sons of the laud,
Every live man there
Allied to a dead man below,
And the deadeast with blood to spare
To quicken a living hand
In case it should ever be slow.
Count how many they come
To the beat of Piedmont's drum,

With faces keener and graver
Than swords of the Austrian slayer,
All set against the foe.
“Emperor
Evermore.”

IX.

Out of the dust, where they ground them;
Out of the holes, where they dogged them;
Out of the hulks, where they wound them
In iron, tortured and flogged them;
Out of the streets, where they chased them,
Taxed them, and then bayoneted them;
Out of the homes, where they spied on them,
(Using their daughters and wives;) Out of the church where they fretted them,
Rotted their souls and debased them,
Trained them to answer with knives,
Then cursed them all at their prayers;
Out of cold lands, not theirs,
Where they exiled them, starved them, lied on them,—
Back they come like a wind, in vain
Cramped up in the hills, that roars its road
The stronger into the open plain;
Or like a fire that burns the hotter
And longer for the crust of cinder,
Serving better the ends of the potter;
Or like a restrained word of God,
Fulfilling itself by what seems to hinder.
“Emperor
Evermore.”

X.

Shout for France and Savoy!
Shout for the helper and doer.
Shout for the good sword's ring,
Shout for the thought still truer.
Shout for the spirits at large
Who passed for the dead this spring,
Whose living glory is sure.
Shout for France and Savoy!
Shout for the council and charge!
Shout for the head of Cavour;
And shout for the heart of a king
That's great with a nation's joy.
Shout for France and Savoy!

xli.

Take up the child, Macmahon, though
 Thy hand be red
 From Magenta's dead,
 And riding on, in front of the troop,
 In the dust of the whirlwind of war,
 Through the gate of the city of Milan,
 stoop
 And take up the child to thy saddle-
 bow,
 Nor fear the touch as soft as a flower
 of his smile as clear as a star.
 Thou hast a right to the child, we say,
 Since the women are weeping for joy
 as they
 Who, by thy help and from this day,
 Shall be happy mothers indeed.
 They are raining flowers, from terrace
 and roof:
 Take up the flower in the child.
 While the shout goes up of a nation
 freed
 And heroically self-reconciled,
 Till the snow on that peaked Alp
 aloof
 Starts, as feeling God's finger anew,
 And all those cold white marble fires
 Of mounting saints on the Duomo-
 spires
 Flicker against the Blue.
 "Emperor
 Evermore."

xii.

Ay, it is he,
 Who rides at the king's right hand !
 Leave room to his horse, and draw to
 the side,
 Nor press too near in the ecstasy
 Of a newly delivered impassioned land.
 He is moved, you see, —
 He who has done it all.
 They call it a cold, stern face;
 But this is Italy
 Who rises up to her place ! —
 For this he fought in his youth,
 Of this he dreamed in the past;
 The lines of the resolute mouth
 Tremble a little at last.
 Cry, he has done it all !
 "Emperor
 Evermore."

xiii.

It is not strange that he did it,
 Though the deed may seem to strain
 To the wonderful, unpermitted,
 For such as lead and reign.

But he is strange, this man:
 The people's instinct found him
 (A wind in the dark that ran
 Through a chink where was no door,)
 And elected him and crowned him
 Emperor
 Evermore.

xiv.

Autocrat ! let them scoff,
 Who fail to comprehend
 That a ruler incarnate of
 The people must transcend
 All common king-born kings.
 These subterranean springs
 A sudden outlet winning
 Have special virtues to spend.
 The people's blood runs through him,
 Dilates from head to foot,
 Creates him absolute,
 And from this great beginning
 Evokes a greater end
 To justify and renew him —
 Emperor
 Evermore.

xv.

What ! did any maintain
 That God or the people (think !)
 Could make a marvel in vain ? —
 Out of the water-jar thereo
 Draw wine that none could drink ?
 Is this a man like the rest, —
 This miracle, made unaware
 By a rapture of popular air,
 And caught to the place that was
 best ?
 You think he could barter and cheat
 As vulgar diplomats use,
 With the people's heart in his breast ?
 Prate a lie into shape
 Lest truth should cumber the road ?
 Play at the fast and loose
 Till the world is strangled with
 tape ?
 Maim the soul's complete
 To fit the hole of a toad,
 And filch the dogman's meat
 To feed the offspring of God ?

xvi.

Nay, but he, this wonder,
 He cannot palter nor prate,
 Though many around him and under,
 With intellects trained to the curve,
 Distrust him in spirit and nerve
 Because his meaning is straight.
 Measure him, ere he depart,

With those who have governed and
led,—
Larger so much by the heart,
Larger so much by the head.
Emperor
Evermore.

XVII.

He holds that, consenting or dissenting,
Nations must move with the time;
Assumes that crime with a precedent
Doubles the guilt of the crime;
—Denies that a slaver's bond,
Or a treaty signed by knaves,
(*Quorum magna pars* and beyond
Was one of an honest name)
Gives an inexpugnable claim
To abolish men into slaves.
Emperor
Evermore.

XVIII.

He will not swagger, nor boast
Of his country's needs, in a tone
Missuitting a great man most,
If such should speak of his own;
Nor will he act on her side
From motives baser, indeed,
Than a man of a noble pride
Can avow for himself at need;
Never, for lucre or laurels,
Or custom, though such should be
rite,
Adapting the smaller morals
To measure the larger life.
He, though the merchants persuade,
And the soldiers are eager for strife,
Finds not his country in quarrels
Only to find her in trade;
While still he accords her such honor
As never to flinch for her sake
Where men put service upon her,
Found heavy to undertake,
And scarcely like to be paid;
Believing a nation may act
Unselfishly, shiver a lance
(As the least of her sons may, in fact,)
And not for a cause of finance.
Emperor
Evermore.

XIX.

Great is he
Who uses his greatness for all.
His name shall stand perpetually
As a name to applaud and cherish,
Not only within the civic wall

For the loyal, but also without
For the generous and free.
Just is he
Who is just for the popular due
As well as the private debt.
The praise of nations ready to perish
Fall on him, — crown him in view
Of tyrants caught in the net,
And statesmen dizzy with fear and
doubt!
And though, because they are many,
And he is merely one,
And nations selfish and cruel
Heap up the inquisitor's fuel
To kill the body of high intents,
And burn great deeds from their
place,
Till this, the greatest of any,
May seem imperfectly done;
Courage, whoever circumvents!
Courage, courage, whoever is base!
The soul of a high intent, be it known,
Can die no more than any soul
Which God keeps by him under
the throne;
And this, at whatever interrim,
Shall live, and be consummated
Into the being of deeds made whole.
Courage, courage! happy is he
Of whom (himself among the dead
And silent), this word shall be said:
—That he might have had the world
with him,
But chose to side with suffering
men,
And had the world against him
when
He came to deliver Italy.
Emperor
Evermore.

THE DANCE.

I.

You remember down at Florence our
Cascine,
Where the people on the feast-days
walk and drive,
And through the trees, long-drawn in
many a green way,
O'er-roofing hum and murmur like
a hive,
The river and the mountains look
alive?

II.

You remember the piazzone there, the stand-place
Of carriages a-brim with Florence beauties,
Who lean and melt to music as the band plays,
Or smile and chat with some one who afoot is,
Or on horseback, in observance of male duties?

III.

Tis so pretty, in the afternoons of summer,
So many gracious faces brought together!
Call it rout, or call it concert, they have come here,
In the floating of the fan and of the feather,
To reciprocate with beauty the fine weather.

IV.

While the flower-girls offer nosegays (because they too go with other sweets) at every carriage-door;
Here, by shake of a white finger, signed away to Some next buyer, who sits buying score on score, Piling roses upon roses evermore.

V.

And last season, when the French camp had its station In the meadow-ground, things quickened and grew gayer Through the mingling of the liberating nation With this people; groups of Frenchmen everywhere, Strolling, gazing, judging lightly — "who was fair."

VI.

Then the noblest lady present took upon her To speak nobly from her carriage for the rest: "Pray these officers from France to do us honor By dancing with us straightway." The request Was gravely apprehended as ad-drest.

VII.

And the men of France bareheaded, bowing lowly, Led out each a proud signora to the space Which the startled crowd had round-ed for them — slowly, Just a touch of still emotion in his face, Not presuming, through the symbol, on the grace.

VIII.

There was silence in the people: some lips trembled, But none jested. Broke the music at a glance; And the daughters of our princes, thus assembled, Stepped the measure with the gallant sons of France, Hush! it might have been a Mass, and not a dance.

IX.

And they danced there till the blue that overskied us swooned with passion, though the footing seemed sedate; And the mountains, heaving mighty hearts beside us, Sighed a rapture in a shadow, to dilate, And touch the holy stone where Dante sate.

X.

Then the sons of Franco bareheaded, lowly bowing, Led the ladies back where kinsmen of the south Stood, received them; till, with burst of overflowing Feeling, husbands, brothers, Florence's male youth, Turned and kissed the martial strangers mouth to mouth.

XI.

And a cry went up, — a cry from all that people! — You have heard a people cheering, you suppose, For the member, mayor . . . with chorus from the steeple? This was different, scarce as loud perhaps (who knows?) For we saw wet eyes around us ere the close.

XII.

And we felt as if a nation, too long
borne in
By hard wrongers, — comprehending
in such attitude
That God had spoken somewhere
since the morning,
That men were somehow brothers,
by no platitude,
Cried exultant in great wonder and
free gratitude.

A TALE OF VILLAFRANCA.
TOLD IN TUSCANY.

I.

My little son, my Florentine,
Sit down beside my knee,
And I will tell you why the sign
Of joy which flushed our Italy
Has faded since but yesternight,
And why your Florence of delight
Is mourning, as you see.

II.

A great man (who was crowned one
day)
Imagined a great deed:
He shaped it out of cloud and clay;
He touched it finely, till the seed
Possessed the flower; from heart and
brain
He fed it with large thoughts humane,
To help a people's need.

III.

He brought it out into the sun:
They blessed it to his face:
“O great pure deed, that hast un-
done
So many bad and base!
O generous deed, heroic deed,
Come forth, be perfected, succeed,
Deliver by God's grace.”

IV.

Then sovereigns, statesmen, north and
south,
Rose up in wrath and fear,
And cried, protesting by one mouth,
“What monster have we here?
A great deed at this hour of day?
A great just deed, and not for pay?
Absurd — or insincere.

V.

“ And if sincere, the heavier blow
In that case we shall bear,
For where's our blessed 'status quo'?
Our holy treaties, where?
Our rights to sell a race, or buy,
Protect and pillage, occupy,
And civilize despair ? ”

VI.

Some muttered that the great deed
meant
A great pretext to sin;
And others, the pretext, so lent,
Was heinous (to begin).
Volcanic terms of “great” and
“just”?
Admit such tongues of flame, the crust
Of time and law fails in.

VII.

A great deed in this world of ours?
Unheard of the pretence is!
It threatens plainly the great Powers,
Is fatal in all senses.
A just deed in the world? — Call out
The rifles! be not slack about
The national defences.

VIII.

And many murmured, “ From this
source
What red blood must be poured ! ”
And some rejoined, “ 'Tis even worse:
What red tape is ignored ! ”
All cursed the doer for an evil
Called here enlarging on the Devil;
There monkeying the Lord.

IX.

Some said it could not be explained;
Some, could not be excused:
And others, “ Leave it unrestrained,
Gehenna's self is loosed.”
And all cried, “ Crush it, maim it,
gag it,
Set dog-toothed lies to tear it ragged,
Truncated and traduced ! ”

X.

But HE stood sad before the sun,
(The peoples felt their fate.)
“ The world is many; I am one:
My great deed was too great.
God's fruit of justice ripens slow:
Men's souls are narrow; let them grow.
My brothers, we must wait.”

XI.

The tale is ended, child of mine,
Turned graver at my knee.
They say your eyes, my Florentine,
Are English: it may be;
And yet I've marked as blue a pair
Following the doves across the square
At Venice by the sea.

XII.

Ah child! ah child! I cannot say
A word more. You conceive
The reason now, why just to-day
We see our Florence grieve.
Ah child, look up into the sky!
In this low world, where great deeds
die,
What matter if we live?

A COURT LADY.

I.

Her hair was tawny with gold; her
eyes with purple were dark;
Her cheeks' pale opal burnt with a
red and restless spark.

II.

Never was lady of Milan nobler in
name and in race;
Never was lady of Italy fairer to see
in the face.

III.

Never was lady on earth more true
as woman and wife,
Larger in judgment and instinct,
prouder in manners and life.

IV.

She stood in the early morning, and
said to her maidens, " Bring
That silken robe made ready to wear
at the court of the king.

V.

" Bring me the clasps of diamond,
lucid, clear of the mote;
Clasp me the large at the waist, and
clasp me the small at the throat.

VI.

" Diamonds to fasten the hair, and
diamonds to fasten the sleeves,
Laces to drop from their rays, like a
powder of snow from the eaves."

VII.

Gorgeous she entered the sunlight,
which gathered her up in a
flame,
While, straight in her open carriage,
she to the hospital came.

VIII.

In she went at the door, and gazing
from end to end,
" Many and low are the pallets; but
each is the place of a friend."

IX.

Up she passed through the wards,
and stood at a young man's bed:
Bloody the hand on his brow, and
livid the droop of his head.

X.

" Art thou a Lombard, my brother?
Happy art thou!" she cried,
And smiled like Italy on him: he
dreamed in her face — and died.

XI.

Pale with his passing soul, she went
on still to a second:
He was a grave hard man, whose
years by dungeons were reckoned.

XII.

Wounds in his body were sore,
wounds in his life were sorcer.
" Art thou a Romagnole?" Her
eyes drove lightnings before
her.

XIII.

" Austrian and priest had joined to
double and tighten the cord
Able to bind thee, O strong one, free
by the stroke of a sword.

XIV.

" Now be grave for the rest of us,
using the life overcast
To ripen our wine of the present
(too new) in glooms of the
past."

XV.

Down she stepped to a pallet where
lay a face like a girl's,
Young, and pathetic with dying, — a
deep black hole in the curls.

XVI.

"Art thou from Tuscany, brother?
and seest thou, dreaming in
pain,
Thy mother stand in the piazza,
searching the list of the slain?"

XVII.

Kind as a mother herself, she touched
his cheeks with her hands:
"Blessed is she who has borne thee,
although she should weep as
she stands."

XVIII.

On she passed to a Frenchman, his
arm carried off by a ball:
Kneeling, "O more than my brother!
how shall I thank thee for all?

XIX.

"Each of the heroes around us has
fought for his land and line;
But thou hast fought for a stranger,
in hate of a wrong not thine.

XX.

"Happy are all free peoples, too
strong to be dispossess;—
But blessed are those among nations
who dare to be strong for the
rest."

XXI.

Ever she passed on her way, and
came to a couch where pined
One with a face from Venetia, white
with a hope out of mind.

XXII.

Long she stood and gazed, and twice
she tried at the name;
But two great crystal tears were all
that faltered and came.

XXIII.

Only a tear for Venice? She turned
as in passion and loss,
And stooped to his forehead and
kissed it, as if she were kissing
the cross.

XXIV.

Faint with that strain of heart, she
moved on then to another,
Stern and strong in his death. "And
dost thou suffer, my brother?"

XXV.

Holding his hands in hers: "Out of
the Piedmont lion
Cometh the sweetness of freedom!
sweetest to live or to die on."

XXVI.

Holding his cold rough hands: "Well,
oh, well have ye done
In noble, noble Piedmont, who would
not be noble alone."

XXVII.

Back he fell while she spoke. She
rose to her feet with a spring,
"That was a Piedmontese! and this
is the court of the King."

AN AUGUST VOICE.

"Una voce augusta." —
MONITORE TOSCANO.

I.

You'll take back your Grand-duke?
I made the treaty upon it.
Just venture a quiet rebuke;
Dall' Ongaro write him a sonnet;
Ricasoli gently explain
Some need of the constitution:
He'll swear to it over again,
Providing an "easy solution."
You'll call back the Grand-duke.

II.

You'll take back your Grand-duke?
I promised the Emperor Francis
To argue the case by his book,
And ask you to meet his advances.
The dual cause, we know,
(Whether you or he be the wronger,) Has very strong points, although
Your bayonets there have stronger.
You'll call back the Grand-duke.

III.

You'll take back your Grand-duke?
He is not pure altogether.
For instance, the oath which he took
(In the Forty-eight rough weather)
He'd " nail your flag to his mast,"
Then softly scuttled the boat you
Hoped to escape in at last,
And both by a " Proprio motu."
You'll call back the Grand-duke.

IV.

You'll take back your Grand-duke?
The scheme meets nothing to shock
it.
In this smart letter, look,
We found in Radetsky's pocket;
Where his Highness in sprightly style
Of the flower of his Tuscans wrote,
" These heads be the hottest in file;
Pray shoot them the quickest."
Quote,
And call back the Grand-duke.

V.

You'll take back your Grand-duke?
There are some things to object to.
He cheated, betrayed, and forsook,
Then called in the foe to protect
you.
He taxed you for wines and for meats
Throughout that eight years' pas-
time
Of Austria's drum in your streets.
Of course you remember the last
time
You called back your Grand-duke.

VI.

You'll take back the Grand-duke?
It is not race he is poor in,
Although he never could brook
The patriot cousin at Turin.
His love of kin you discern,
By his hate of your flag and me—
So decidedly apt to turn
All colors at the sight of the three.¹
You'll call back the Grand-duke.

VII.

You'll take back your Grand-duke?
'Twas weak that he fled from the
Pitti;
But consider how little he shook
At thought of bombarding your city!

¹ The Italian tricolor,—red, green, and white.

And, balancing that with this,
The Christian rule is plain for us;
. . . Or the Holy Father's Swiss
Have shot his Perugians in vain for
us.
You'll call back the Grand-duke.

VIII.

Pray take back your Grand-duke.
— I, too, have suffered persuasion.
All Europe, raven and rook,
Screeched at me armed for your
nation.
Your cause in my heart struck spurs:
I swept such warnings aside for you:
My very child's eyes, and hers,
Grew like my brother's who died
for you.
You'll call back the Grand-duke.

IX.

You'll take back your Grand-duke?
My French fought nobly with rea-
son, —
Left many a Lombardy nook
Red as with wine out of season.
Little we grudged what was done
there,
Paid freely your ransom of blood:
Our heroes stark in the sun there,
We would not recall if we could.
You'll call back the Grand-duke.

X.

You'll take back your Grand-duke?
His son rode fast as he got off
That day on the enemy's hook,
When I had an epaulet shot off.
Though splashed (as I saw him afar,
no,
Near) by those ghastly rains,
The mark, when you've washed him
in Arno,
Will scarcely be larger than Cain's.
You'll call back the Grand-duke.

XI.

You'll take back your Grand-duke?
'Twill be so simple, quite beautiful:
The shepherd recovers his crook,
. . . If you should be sheep, and
dutiful.
I spoke a word worth chalking
On Milan's wall—but stay,
Here's Poniatowsky talking,—
You'll listen to him to-day,
And call back the Grand-duke.

XII.

You'll take back your Grand-duke ?
 Observe, there's no one to force it,
 Unless the Madonna, St. Luke
 Drew for you, choose to indorse it.
 I charge you by great St. Martino,
 And prodigies quickened by wrong,
 Remember your dead on Ticino;
 Be worthy, be constant, be strong.
 — Bah ! — call back the Grand-duke !

CHRISTMAS GIFTS.

ώς βασιλεῖ, ώς θεῷ, ώς νεκρῷ.

GREGORY NAZZANEN.

I.

THE Pope on Christmas Day
 Sits in St. Peter's chair;
 But the peoples murmur, and say,
 "Our souls are sick and forlorn,
 And who will show us where
 Is the stable where Christ was
 born?"

II.

The star is lost in the dark;
 The manger is lost in the straw:
 The Christ cries faintly . . . hark ! —
 Through bands that swaddle and
 strangle —
 But the Pope in the chair of awe
 Looks down the great quadrangle.

III.

The magi kneel at his foot,
 Kings of the east and west;
 But, instead of the angels (mute
 Is the "Peace on earth" of their
 song),
 The peoples, perplexed and oppress,
 Are sighing, "How long! how
 long!"

IV.

And, instead of the kine, bewilder in
 Shadow of aisle and dome,
 The bear who tore up the children,
 The fox who burnt up the corn,
 And the wolf who suckled at Rome
 Brothers to slay and to scorn,

V.

Cardinals left and right of him,
 Worshippers round and beneath,
 The silver trumpets at sight of him,
 Thrill with a musical blast:
 But the people say through their
 teeth,
 "Trumpets? we wait for the
 Last!"

VI.

He sits in the place of the Lord,
 And asks for the gifts of the time,—
 Gold, for the haft of a sword,
 To win back Romagna averse,
 Incense to sweeten a crime,
 And myrrh to imbibter a curse.

VII.

Then a king of the west said, "Good !
 I bring thee the gifts of the time,—
 Red, for the patriot's blood;
 Green, for the martyr's crown;
 White for the dew and the rime,
 When the morning of God comes
 down."

VIII.

— O mystic tricolor bright !
 The Pope's heart quailed like a
 man's;
 The cardinals froze at the sight,
 Bowing their tonsures hoary;
 And the eyes in the peacock-fans
 Winked at the alien glory.

IX.

But the peoples exclaimed in hope,
 "Now blessed be he who has
 brought
 These gifts of the time to the Pope,
 When our souls were sick and for-
 lorn;
 — And here is the star we sought,
 To show us where Christ was
 born!"

ITALY AND THE WORLD.

I.

FLORENCE, Bologna, Parma, Modena,
 When you named them a year ago,
 So many graves reserved by God, in a
 Day of Judgment, you seemed to
 know,
 To open and let out the resurrection.

II.

And meantime (you made your reflection,
If you were English) was nought to be done
But sorting sables, in predilection
For all those martyrs dead and gone,
Till the new earth and heaven made ready.

III.

And if your politics were not heady,
Violent . . . "Good," you added,
"good
In all things! mourn on sure and steady.
Churchyard thistles are wholesome food
For our European wandering asses.

IV.

"The date of the resurrection passes
Human foreknowledge: men unborn
Will gain by it (even in the lower classes);
But none of these. It is not the morn
Because the cock of France is crowing.

V.

"Cocks crow at midnight, seldom knowing
Starlight from dawn-light. 'Tis a mad
Poor creature." Here you paused, and growing
Scornful, suddenly, let us add,
The trumpet sounded, the graves were open.

VI.

Life and life and life! agrope in
The dusk of death, warm hands stretched out
For swords, proved more life still to hope in,
Beyond and behind. Arise with a shout,
Nation of Italy, slain and buried!

VII.

Hill to hill, and turret to turret,
Flashing the tricolor,—newly created
Beautiful Italy, calm, unhurried,
Rise heroic and renovated,
Rise to the final restitution.

VIII.

Rise; prefigure the grand solution
Of earth's municipal, insular schisms,
Statesmen draping self-lovè's conclusion
In cheap vernacular patriotisms,
Unable to give up Judæa for Jesus.

IX.

Bring us the higher example; release us
Into the larger coming time;
And into Christ's broad garment piece us
Rags of virtue as poor as crime,
National selfishness, civic vaunting.

X.

No more Jew nor Greek then, taunting
Nor taunted; no more England nor France!
But one confederate brotherhood planting
One flag only to mark the advance,
Onward and upward, of all humanity

XI.

For civilization perfected
Is fully developed Christianity.
"Measure the frontier," shall it be said,
"Count the ships," in national vanity?
—Count the nation's heart-beats sooner.

XII.

For, though behind by a cannon or schooner,
That nation still is predominant,
Whose pulse beats quickest in zeal to oppugn or
Succor another, in wrong or want,
Passing the frontier in love and abhorrence.

XIII.

Modena, Parma, Bologna, Florence,
Open us out the wider way!
Dwarf in that chapel of old St. Lawrence
Your Michel Angelo's giant Day,
With the grandeur of this Day breaking o'er us!

XIV.

Ye who, restrained as an ancient
chorus,
Mute while the coryphaeus spake,
Hush your separate voices before us,
Sink your separate lives for the sake
Of one sole Italy's living forever!

XV.

Givers of coat and cloak too, — never
Grudging that purple of yours at
the best, —
By your heroic will and endeavor
Each sublimely dispossest,
That all may inherit what each sur-
renders!

XVI.

Earth shall bless you, O noble emend-
ers
On egotist nations! Ye shall lead
The plough of the world, and sow
new splendors
Into the furrow of things for seed,
Ever the richer for what ye have
given.

XVII.

Lead us and teach us, till earth and
heaven
Grow larger around us, and higher
above.
Our sacrament bread has a bitter
leaven;
We bait our traps with the name of
love,
Till hate itself has a kinder meaning.

XVIII.

Oh, this world: this cheating, and
screening
Of cheats! this conscience for can-
dle-wicks,
Not beacon-fires! this over-weening
Of underhand diplomatical tricks,
Dared for the country while scorned
for the counter!

XIX.

Oh, this envy of those who mount
here,
And oh, this malice to make them
trip!
Rather quenching the fire there, dry-
ing the fount here,
To frozen body and thirsty lip,
Than leave to a neighbor their minis-
tration.

XX.

I cry aloud in my poet-passion,
Viewing my England o'er Alp and
sea.
I loved her more in her ancient fash-
ion:
She carries her rifles too thick for
me,
Who spares them so in the cause of a
brother.

XXI.

Suspicion, panic? end this pother.
The sword kept sheathless at peace-
time rusts.
None fears for himself while he feels
for another:
The brave man either fights or
trusts,
And wears no mail in his private
chamber.

XXII.

Beautiful Italy! golden amber
Warm with the kisses of lover and
traitor!
Thou who hast drawn us on to re-
member,
Draw us to hope now: let us be
greater
By this new future than that old
story,

XXIII.

Till truer glory replaces all glory,
As the torch grows blind at the
dawn of day;
And the nations, rising up, their
sorry
And foolish sins shall put away,
As children their toys when the
teacher enters.

XXIV.

Till Love's one centre devour these
centres
Of many self-loves; and the patri-
ot's trick
To better his land by egotist ven-
tures,
Defamed from a virtue, shall make
men sick,
As the scalp at the belt of some red
hero.

XXV.

For certain virtues have dropped to
zero,
Left by the sun on the mountain's
dewy side;

Churchman's charities, tender as
Nero,
Indian suttee, heathen suicide,
Service to rights divine proved hol-
low:

XXVI.

And Heptarchy patriotisms must fol-
low.
— National voices, distinct yet de-
pendent,
Enshpereing each other, as swallow
does swallow,
With circles still widening and
ever ascendent,
In multiform life to united progres-
sion,—

XXVII.

These shall remain. And when in
the session
Of nations, the separate language is
heard,
Each shall aspire, in sublime indis-
cretion,
To help with a thought or exalt
with a word
Less her own than her rival's honor.

XXVIII.

Each Christian nation shall take upon
her
The law of the Christian man in
vast:
The crown of the getter shall fall to
the donor,
And last shall be first while first
shall be last,
And to love best shall still be to reign
unsurpassed.

A CURSE FOR A NATION.

PROLOGUE.

I HEARD an angel speak last night,
And he said, "Write I—
Write a nation's curse for me,
And send it over the Western Sea."

I faltered, taking up the word:
"Not so, my lord!
If curses must be, choose another
To send thy curse against my brother.

"For I am bound by gratitude,
By love and blood,
To brothers of mine across the sea,
Who stretch out kindly hands to me."

"Therefore," the voice said, "shalt
thou write
My curse to-night.
From the summits of love a curse is
driven,
As lightning is from the tops of
heaven."

"Not so," I answered. "Evermore
My heart is sore
For my own land's sins: for little
feet
Of children bleeding along the street:

"For parked-up honors that gainsay
The right of way:
For almsgiving through a door that is
Not open enough for two friends to
kiss:

"For love of freedom which abates
Beyond the Straits:
For patriot virtue starved to vice on
Self-praise, self-interest, and suspi-
cion:

"For an oligarchic parliament,
And bribes well-meant.
What curse to another land assign,
When heavy-souled for the sins of
mine?"

"Therefore," the voice said, "shalt
thou write
My curse to-night.
Because thou hast strength to see and
hate
A foul thing done *within* thy gate."

"Not so," I answered once again.
"To curse choose men.
For I, a woman, have only known
How the heart melts, and the tears
run down."

"Therefore," the voice said, "shalt
thou write
My curse to-night.
Some women weep and curse, I say,
(And no one marvels) night and day.

"And thou shalt take their part to-
night,
Weep and write.

A curse from the depths of woman-hood
Is very salt, and bitter, and good."

So thus I wrote, and mourned indeed,
What all may read.
And thus as was enjoined on me,
I send it over the Western Sea.

THE CURSE.

I.

Because ye have broken your own chain
With the strain
Of brave men climbing a nation's height,
Yet thence bear down with brand and thong
On souls of others,—for this wrong
This is the curse. Write.

Because yourselves are standing straight
In the state
Of Freedom's foremost acolyte,
Yet keep calm footing all the time
On writhing bond-slaves,—for this crime
This is the curse. Write.

Because ye prosper in God's name,
With a claim
To honor in the old world's sight,
Yet do the fiend's work perfectly
In strangling martyrs,—for this lie
This is the curse. Write.

II.

Ye shall watch while kings conspire
Round the people's smouldering fire,
And, warm for your part,
Shall never dare—O shame!
To utter the thought into flame
Which burns at your heart.
This is the curse. Write.

Ye shall watch while nations strive
With the bloodhounds, die or survive,
Drop faint from their jaws,

Or throttle them backward to death;
And only under your breath
Shall favor the cause.
This is the curse. Write.

Ye shall watch while strong men draw
The nets of feudal law
To strangle the weak;
And, counting the sin for a sin,
Your soul shall be sadder within
Than the word ye shall speak.
This is the curse. Write.

When good men are praying erect
That Christ may avenge his elect,
And deliver the earth,
The prayer in your ears, said low,
Shall sound like the tramp of a foe
That's driving you forth.
This is the curse. Write.

When wise men give you their praise,
They shall pause in the heat of the phrase,
As if carried too far.
When ye boast your own charters kept true,
Ye shall blush; for the thing which ye do
Derides what ye are.
This is the curse. Write.

When fools cast taunts at your gate,
Your scorn ye shall somewhat abate
As ye look o'er the wall:
For your conscience, tradition, and name

Explode with a deadlier blame
Than the worst of them all.
This is the curse. Write.

Go, wherever ill deeds shall be done,
Go, plant your flag in the sun
Beside the ill-doers!
And recoil from clenching the curse
Of God's witnessing Universe
With a curse of yours.
This is the curse. Write.

LAST POEMS.

A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

THESE poems are given as they occur on a list drawn up last June. A few had already been printed in periodicals.

There is hardly such direct warrant for publishing the translations, which were only intended, many years ago, to accompany and explain certain engravings after ancient gems, in the projected work of a friend, by whose kindness they are now recovered; but, as two of the original series (the "Adonis" of Bion, and "Song to the Rose," from Achilles Tatius) have subsequently appeared, it is presumed that the remainder may not improperly follow.

A single recent version is added.

LONDON, February, 1862.

LITTLE MATTIE

I.

DEAD ! Thirteen a month ago !
Short and narrow her life's walk.
Lover's love she could not know
Even by a dream or talk:
Too young to be glad of youth,
Missing honor, labor, rest,
And the warmth of a babe's mouth
At the blossom of her breast.
Must you pity her for this
And for all the loss it is,
You, her mother, with wet face,
Having had all in your case ?

II.

Just so young but yesternight,
Now she is old as death.
Meek, obedient in your sight,
Gentle to a beck or breath
Only on last Monday ! Yours,
Answering you like silver bells
Lightly touched ! An hour matures:
You can teach her nothing else.
She has seen the mystery hid
Under Egypt's pyramid:
By those eyelids pale and close
Now she knows what Rhamses knows.

III.

Cross her quiet hands, and smooth
Down her patient locks of silk,
Cold and passive as in truth
You your fingers in spilt milk
Drew along a marble floor;
But her lips you cannot wring
Into saying a word more,
" Yes," or " No," or such a thing:
Though you call and beg and wreak
Half your soul out in a shriek,
She will lie there in default
And most innocent revolt.

IV.

Ay, and if she spoke, may be
She would answer like the Son,
" What is now 'twixt thee and me ? "
Dreadful answer ! better none.
Yours on Monday, God's to-day !
Yours, your child, your blood, your
heart,
Called . . . you called her, did you
say,
" Little Mattie " for your part ?
Now already it sounds strange,
And you wonder, in this change,
What He calls his angel-creature,
Higher up than you can reach her.

v.

'Twas a green and easy world
As she took it; room to play,
(Though one's hair might get uncurled
At the far end of the day).

What she suffered she shook off
In the sunshine: what she sinned
She could pray on high enough
To keep safe above the wind.

If reproved by God or you,
'Twas to better her, she knew;
And, if crossed, she gathered still
'Twas to cross out something ill.

vi.

You, you had the right, you thought,
To survey her with sweet scorn,
Poor gay child, who had not caught
Yet the octave-stretch forlorn
Of your larger wisdom! Nay,
Now your places are changed so,
In that same superior way
She regards you dull and low
As you did herself exempt
From life's sorrows. Grand contempt
Of the spirits risen a while,
Who look back with such a smile!

vii.

There's the sting o'it. That, I think,
Hurts the most a thousand-fold!
To feel sudden, at a wink,
Some dear child we used to scold,
Praise, love both ways, kiss and tease,
Teach, and tumble as our own
All its curls about our knees,
Rise up suddenly full-grown.
Who could wonder such a sight
Made a woman mad outright?
Show me Michael with the sword
Rather than such angels, Lord?

A FALSE STEP.

I.

SWEET, thou hast trod on a heart.
Pass; there's a world full of men;
And women as fair as thou art
Must do such things now and then.

II.

Thou only hast stepped unaware;
Malice, not one can impute;

And why should a heart have been
there,
In the way of a fair woman's foot ?

III.

It was not a stone that could trip,
Nor was it a thorn that could rend:
Put up thy proud underlip!
'Twas merely the heart of a friend.

IV.

And yet, peradventure, one day
Thou, sitting alone at the glass,
Reckoning the bloom gone away,
Where the smile in its complement
was,

V.

And seeking around thee in vain,
From hundreds who fluttered before,
Such a word as, " Oh, not in the main
Do I hold thee less precious, but
more ! " . . .

VI.

Thou'l sigh, very like, on thy part,
" Of all I have known or can know,
I wish I had only that heart
I trod upon ages ago ! "

VOID IN LAW

I.

SLEEP, little babe, on my knee,
Sleep, for the midnight is chill,
And the moon has died out in the
tree,
And the great human world goeth
• ill.

Sleep, for the wicked agree:
Sleep, let them do as they will.
Sleep.

II.

Sleep, thou hast drawn from my
breast
The last drop of milk that was good,
And now, in a drean, suck the rest,
Lest the real should trouble thy
blood.
Suck, little lips dispossest,
As we kiss in the air whom we
would.
Sleep.

III.

O lips of thy father ! the same,
So like! Very deeply they swore
When he gave me his ring and his
name,
To take back, I imagined, no more !
And now is all changed like a game,
Though the old cards are used as of
yore ?
Sleep.

IV.

"Void in law," said the courts.
Something wrong
In the forms ? Yet, "till death part
us two,
I James take thee Jessie," was
strong,
And ONE witness competent. True
Such a marriage was worth an old
song,
Heard in heaven, though, as plain
as the New.
Sleep.

V.

Sleep, little child, his and mine !
Her throat has the antelope curve,
And her cheek just the color and line
Which fade not before him nor
swerve;
Yet she has no child ! the divine
Seal of right upon loves that deserve.
Sleep.

VI.

My child ! though the world take her
part,
Saying, "She was the woman to
choose,
He had eyes, was a man in his heart,"
We twain the decision refuse;
We . . . weak as I am, as thou art,
Cling on to him, never to loose.
Sleep.

VII.

He thinks, that, when done with this
place,
All's ended ? he'll new-stamp the
ore ?
Yes, Caesar's — but not in our case.
Let him learn we are waiting before
The grave's mouth, the heaven's gate,
God's face,
With implacable love evermore.
Sleep.

VIII.

He's ours, though he kissed her but
now ;
He's ours, though she kissed in re-
ply ;
He's ours, though himself disavow,
And God's universe favor the lie,—
Ours to claim, ours to clasp, ours be-
low,
Ours above, . . . if we live, if we
die.
Sleep.

IX.

Ah, baby, my baby, too rough
Is my lullaby ? What have I said ?
Sleep ! When I've wept long enough
I shall learn to weep softly instead,
And piece with some alien stuff
My heart to lie smooth for thy head.
Sleep.

X.

Two souls met upon thee, my sweet ;
Two loves led thee out to the sun :
Alas, pretty hands, pretty feet,
If the one who remains (only one)
Set her grief at thee, turned in a heat
To thine enemy — were it well done ?
Sleep.

XI.

May He of the manger stand near
And love thee ! An infant he came
To his own who rejected him here,
But the Magi brought gifts all the
same.
I hurry the cross on my dear !
My gifts are the griefs I declare !
Sleep.

LORD WALTER'S WIFE.

I.

"BUT why do you go ?" said the
lady, while both sate under the
yew,
And her eyes were alive in their
depth, as the kraken beneath
the sea-blue.

II.

"Because I fear you," he answered;
"because you are far too fair,
And able to strangle my soul in a
mesh of your gold-colored hair."

III.

"Oh, that," she said, "is no reason.
Such knots are quickly undone,
And too much beauty, I reckon, is
nothing but too much sun."

IV.

"Yet farewell so," he answered:
"the sun-stroke's fatal at times.
I value your husband, Lord Walter,
whose gallop rings still from
the limes."

V.

"Oh, that," she said, "is no reason.
You smell a rose through a
fence:
If two should smell it, what matter?
who grumbles? and where's the
pretence?"

VI.

"But I," he replied, "have promised
another, when love was free,
To love her alone, alone, who alone
and afar loves me."

VII.

"Why, that," she said, "is no reason.
Love's always free, I am told.
Will you vow to be safe from the
headache on Tuesday, and
think it will hold?"

VIII.

"But you," he replied, "have a
daughter, a young little child,
who was laid
In your lap to be pure; so I leave
you: the angels would make
me afraid."

IX.

"Oh, that," she said, "is no reason.
The angels keep out of the way;
And Dora, the child, observes nothing,
although you should please
me and stay."

X.

At which he rose up in his anger.
"Why, now you no longer are
fair!
Why, now you no longer are fatal,
but ugly and hateful, I swear."

XL.

At which she laughed out in her
scorn: "These men! oh, these
men overnice,
Who are shocked if a color not virtuous
is frankly put on by a vice."

XII.

Her eyes blazed upon him: "And
you! You bring us your vices
so near!
That we smell them! You think in
our presence a thought 'twould
defame us to bear!"

XIII.

"What reason had you, and what
right, — I appeal to your soul
from my life, —
To find me too fair as a woman?
Why, sir, I am pure, and a wife.

XIV.

"Is the daystar too fair up above
you? It burns you not. Dare
you imply
I brushed you more close than the
star does, when Walter had set
me as high?

XV.

"If a man finds a woman too fair, he
means simply adapted too much
To uses unlawful and fatal. The
praise! — shall I thank you for
such?

XVI.

"Too fair? Not unless you misuse
us? and surely, if once in a
while
You attain to it, straightway you call
us no longer too fair, but too
vile.

XVII.

"A moment, — I pray your attention!
— I have a poor word in my
head
I must utter, though womanly custom
would set it down better un-
said.

XVIII.

"You grew, sir, pale to impertinence,
once when I showed you a ring.
You kissed my fan when I dropped
it. No matter! — I've broken
the thing.

xix.

" You did me the honor, perhaps, to be moved at my side now and then
In the senses,—a vice, I have heard, which is common to beasts and some men.

xx.

" Love's a virtue for heroes!—as white as the snow on high hills, And immortal, as every great soul is that struggles, endures, and fulfills.

xxi.

" I love my Walter profoundly,—you, Maude, though you faltered a week,
For the sake of . . . what was it? an eyebrow? or, less still, a mole on a cheek?

xxii.

" And since, when all's said, you're too noble to stoop to the frivolous cant
About crimes irresistible, virtues that swindle, betray, and supplant,

xxiii.

" I determined to prove to yourself, that, whate'er you might dream or avow
By illusion, you wanted precisely no more of me than you have now.

xxiv.

" There! Look me full in the face!
—in the face. Understand, if you can,
That the eyes of such women as I am are clean as the palm of a man.

xxv.

" Drop his hand, you insult him.
Avoid us for fear we should cost you a scar—
You take us for harlots, I tell you, and not for the women we are.

xxvi.

" You wronged me; but then I considered . . . there's Walter!
And so at the end,

I vowed that he should not be mulcted by me in the hand of a friend.

xxvii.

" Have I hurt you indeed? We are quits, then. Nay, friend of my Walter, be mine!
Come Dora, my darling, my angel, and help me to ask him to dine."

BIANCA AMONG THE NIGHTINGALES.

I.

THE cypress stood up like a church
That night we felt our love would hold,
And saintly moonlight seemed to search
And wash the whole world clean as gold;
The olives crystallized the vales'
Broad slopes until the hills grew strong;
The fireflies and the nightingales
Throbbed each to either, flaine and song.
The nightingales, the nightingales.

II.

Upon the angle of its shade
The cypress stood, self-balanced high;
Half up, half down, as double-made,
Along the ground, against the sky,
And we, too! from such soul-height went
Such leaps of blood, so blindly driven,
We scarce knew if our nature meant
Most passionate earth or intense heaven.
The nightingales, the nightingales.

III.

We paled with love, we shook with love,
We kissed so close we could not vow;
Till Giulio whispered, " Sweet, above
God's Ever guarantees this Now."

And through his words the nightingales
Drove straight and full their long,
clear call,
Like arrows through heroic mails,
And love was awful in it all.
The nightingales, the nightingales.

IV.

O cold, white moonlight of the north,
Refresh these pulses, quench this
hell!
O coverture of death drawn forth
Across this garden-chamber . . .
well!
But what have nightingales to do
In gloomy England, called the
free . . .
(Yes, free to die in! . . .) when we
two
Are sundered, singing still to me?
And still they sing, the nightingales.

V.

I think I hear him, how he cried
"My own soul's life" between their
notes.
Each man has but one soul supplied,
And that's immortal. Though his
throat's
On fire with passion now, to her
He can't say what to me he said!
And yet he moves her, they aver.
The nightingales sing through my
head,
The nightingales, the nightingales.

VI.

He says to her what moves her most.
He would not name his soul with-
in
Her hearing; rather pays her cost
With praises to her lips and chin.
Man has but one soul, 'tis ordained,
And each soul but one love, I add;
Yet souls are damned, and love's pro-
faned.
These nightingales will sing me
mad!
The nightingales, the nightingales.

VII.

I marvel how the birds can sing.
There's little difference, in their
view,
Betwixt our Tuscan trees that spring
As vital flames into the blue,

And dull, round blots of foliage meant
Like saturated sponges here
To suck the fogs up. As content
Is he, too, in this land, tis clear.
And still they sing, the nightingales.

VIII.

My native Florence! dear, foregone!
I see across the Alpine ridge
How the last feast-day of St. John
Shot rockets from Carrara bridge.
The luminous city, tall with fire,
Trod deep down in that river of ours,
While many a boat with lamp and
choir
Skinned birdlike over glittering
towers.
I will not hear these nightingales.

IX.

I seem to float, we seem to float,
Down Arno's stream in festive
guise;
A boat strikes flame into our boat,
And up that lady seems to rise
As then she rose. The shock had
flashed
A vision on us! What a head!
What leaping eyeballs! — beauty
dashed
To splendor by a sudden dread.
And still they sing, the nightingales.

X.

Too bold to sin, too weak to die:
Such women are so. As for me,
I would we had drowned there, he
and I,
That moment, loving perfectly.
He had not caught her with her loosened
Gold ringlets . . . rarer in the
south . . .
Nor heard the "Grazie tanto" bruised
To sweetness by her English mouth.
And still they sing, the nightingales.

XI.

She had not reached him at my heart
With her fine tongue, as snakes in-
deed
Kill flies; nor had I, for my part,
Yearned after, in my desperate
need,
And followed him, as he did her,
To coast left bitter by the tide,
Whose very nightingales, elsewhere
Delighting, torture and deride!
For still they sing, the nightingales.

XII.

A worthless woman, mere cold clay,
As all false things are; but so fair,
She takes the breath of men away
Who gaze upon her unaware.
I would not play her larcenous tricks
To have her looks! She lied and
stole,
And spat into my love's pure pyx
The rank saliva of her soul.
And still they sing, the nightingales.

XIII.

I would not for her white and pink,
Though such he likes; her grace of
limb,
Though such he has praised; nor yet,
I think,
For life itself, though spent with
him,—
Commit such sacrilege, affront
God's nature which is love, intrude
'Twixt two affianced souls, and hunt
Like spiders in the altar's wood.
I cannot bear these nightingales.

XIV.

If she chose sin, some gentler guise
She might have sinned in, so it
seems:
She might have pricked out both my
eyes,
And I still seen him in my dreams!
—Or drugged me in my soup or wine,
Nor left me angry afterward;
To die here with his hand in mine,
His breath upon me, were not hard.
(Our Lady hush these nightingales!)

XV.

But set a sponge for him, "mio ben,"
My only good, my first, last love!
Though Christ knows well what sin
is, when
He sees some things done, they must
move
Himself to wonder. Let her pass.
I think of her by night and day.
Must I, too, join her . . . out, alas! . . .
With Giulio, in each word I say?
And evermore the nightingales!

XVI.

Giulio, my Giulio! — sing they so,
And you be silent? Do I speak,

And you not hear? An arm you
throw
Round some one, and I feel so
weak?
— O owl-like birds! They sing for
spite,
They sing for hate, they sing for
doom,
They'll sing through death who sing
through night,
They'll sing, and stun me in the
tomb—
The nightingales, the nightingales!

MY KATE.

I.

SHE was not as pretty as women I
know;
And yet all your best, made of sun-
shine and snow,
Drop to shade, melt to nought, in the
long trodden ways,
While she's still remembered on warm
and cold days —

My Kate.

II.

Her air had a meaning, her move-
ments a grace;
You turned from the fairest to gaze
on her face;
And, when you had once seen her
forehead and mouth,
You saw as distinctly her soul and
her truth —

My Kate.

III.

Such a blue inner light from her eye-
lids outbroke,
You looked at her silence, and fancied
she spoke:
When she did, so peculiar yet soft
was the tone,
Though the loudest spoke also, you
heard her alone —

My Kate.

IV.

I doubt if she said to you much that
could act
As a thought or suggestion: she did
not attract

In the sense of the brilliant or wise;
I infer
'Twas her thinking of others made
you think of her —

My Kate.

v.

She never found fault with you, never
implied
Your wrong by her right; and yet
men at her side
Grew nobler, girls purer, as through
the whole town
The children were gladder that pulled
at her gown —

My Kate.

VI.

None knelt at her feet confessed lov-
ers in thrall:
They knelt more to God than they
used, — that was all.
If you praised her as charming, some
asked what you meant;
But the charin' of her presence was
felt when she went —

My Kate.

VII.

The weak and the gentle, the ribald
and rude,
She took as she found them, and did
them all good;
It always was so with her — see what
you have!
She has made the grass greener even
here . . . with her grave —

My Kate.

VIII.

My dear one! when thou wast alive
with the rest,
I held thee the sweetest, and loved
thee the best;
And now thou art dead, shall I not
take thy part,
As thy smiles used to do for thyself,
my sweet heart —

My Kate?

A SONG FOR THE RAGGED-SCHOOLS OF LONDON.

WRITTEN IN ROME.

I.

I AM listening here in Rome.
"England's strong," say many
speakers:

"If she winks, the Czar must come,
Prow and topsail to the breakers."

II.

"England's rich in coal and oak,"
Adds a Roman, getting moody:
"If she shakes a travelling-cloak,
Down our Appian roll the scudi."

III.

"England's righteous," they rejoin:
"Who shall grudge her exaltation,
When her wealth of golden coin
Works the welfare of the nations?"

IV.

I am listening here in Rome.
Over Alps a voice is sweeping, —
"England's cruel, save us some
Of these victims in her keeping!"

V.

As the cry beneath the wheel
Of an old triumphal Roman
Cleft the people's shouts like steel,
While the show was spoilt for no
man,

VI.

Comes that voice. Let others shout,
Other poets praise my land here:
I am sadly sitting out,
Praying, "God forgive her gran-
deur."

VII.

Shall we boast of empire, where
Time with ruin sits commissioned?
In God's liberal blue air
Peter's dome itself looks wizened;

VIII.

And the mountains, in disdain,
Gather back their lights of opal
From the dumb despondent plain,
Heaped with jaw-bones of a people.

IX.

Lordly English think it o'er,
Caesar's doing is all undone!
You have cannons on your shore,
And free Parliaments in London,

X.

Princes' parks, and merchants'
homes,
Tents for soldiers, ships for sea-
men, —

Ay, but ruins worse than Rome's
In your pauper men and women.

xi.

Women leering through the gas,
(Just such bosoms used to nurse
you,)
Men, turned wolves by famine,—
pass!
Those can speak themselves, and
curse you.

xii.

But these others — children small,
Split like blots about the city,
Quay and street, and palace-wall —
Take them up into your pity!

xiii.

Ragged children with bare feet,
Whom the angels in white raiment
Know the names of, to repeat
When they come on you for pay-
ment.

xiv.

Ragged children, hungry-eyed,
Huddled up out of the coldness
On your doorsteps, side by side,
Till your footman damns their bold-
ness.

xv.

In the alleys, in the squares,
Begging, lying little rebels;
In the noisy thoroughfares,
Struggling on with piteous trebles.

xvi.

Patient children — think what pain
Makes a young child patient—
ponder!
Wronged too commonly to strain
After right, or wish, or wonder.

xvii.

Wicked children, with peaked chins,
And old foreheads! there are many
With no pleasures except sins,
Gambling with a stolen penny.

xviii.

Sickly children, that whine low
To themselves, and not their
mothers,
From mere habit, — never so
Hoping help or care from others.

xix.

Healthy children, with those blue
English eyes, fresh from their
Maker,
Fierce and ravenous, staring through
At the brown loaves of the baker.

xx.

I am listening here in Rome,
And the Romans are confessing,
“ English children pass in bloom
All the prettiest made for blessing.

xxi.

“ *Angli angeli!*” (resumed
From the mediæval story)
“ Such rose angelhoods, emplumed
In such ringlets of pure glory !”

xxii.

Can we smooth down the bright hair,
O my sisters! calm, unthrilled in
Our heart's pulses? Can we bear
The sweet looks of our own children,

xxiii.

While those others, lean and small,
Scurf and mildew of the city,
Spot our streets, convict us all
Till we take them into pity?

xxiv.

“ Is it our fault?” you reply,
“ When, throughout civilization,
Every nation's empire
Is asserted by starvation ?

xxv.

“ All these mouths we cannot feed,
And we cannot clothe these bodies.”
Well, if man's so hard indeed,
Let them learn, at least, what God
is!

xxvi.

Little outcasts from life's fold,
The grave's hope they may be
joined in,
By Christ's covenant consoled
For our social contract's grinding

xxvii.

If no better can be done,
Let us do but this, — endeavor
That the sun behind the sun
Shine upon them while they shiver!

xxviii.

On the dismal London flags,
Through the cruel social joggle,
Put a thought beneath their rags
To enoble the heart's struggle.

xxix.

O my sisters! not so much
Are we asked for,—not a blossom
From our children's nosegay, such
As we gave it from our bosom,

xxx.

Not the milk left in their cup,
Not the lamp while they are sleeping,
Not the little cloak hung up
While the coat's in daily keeping,

xxxi.

But a place in RAGGED-SCHOOLS,
Where the outcasts may to-morrow
Learn by gentle words and rules
Just the uses of their sorrow.

xxxii.

O my sisters! children small,
Blue-eyed, wailing through the city,
Our own babes cry in them all:
Let us take them into pity.

MAY'S LOVE.

I.

You love all, you say,—
Round, beneath, above, me:
Find me, then, some way
Better than to love me,
Me, too, dearest May!

II.

O world-kissing eyes
Which the blue heavens melt to;
I, sad, otherwise,
Loathe the sweet looks dealt to
All things—men and flies.

III.

You love all, you say:
Therefore, dear, abate me
Just your love, I pray!
Slut your eyes and hate me—
Only me, fair May!

AMY'S CRUELTY.

I.

FAIR Amy of the terraced house,
Assist me to discover
Why you, who would not hurt a
mouse,
Can torture so your lover.

II.

You give your coffee to the cat,
You stroke the dog for coming,
And all your face grows kinder at
The little brown bee's humming.

III.

But when he haunts your door . . .
the town
Marks coming, and marks going . . .
You seem to have stitched your eye-
lids down
To that long piece of sewing!

IV.

You never give a look, not you,
Nor drop him a "Good-morning,"
To keep his long day warm and blue,
So fretted by your scorning.

V.

She shook her head—"The mouse
and bee
For crumb or flower will linger;
The dog is happy at my knee;
The cat purrs at my finger.

VI.

"But he . . . to him, the least thing
given
Means great things at a distance:
He wants my world, my sun, my
heaven,
Soul, body, whole existence.

VII.

"They say love gives, as well as takes;
But I'm a simple maiden,—
My mother's first smile when she
wakes
I still have smiled and prayed in.

VIII.

"I only know my mother's love,
Which gives all, and asks nothing;
And this new loving sets the groove
Too much the way of loathing.

IX.

" Unless he gives me all in change,
I forfeit all things by him:
The risk is terrible and strange—
I tremble, doubt . . . deny him

X.

" He's sweetest friend or hardest foe,
Best angel or worst devil:
I either hate or . . . love him so,
I can't be merely civil!

XI.

" You trust a woman who puts forth
Her blossoms thick as summer's?
You think she dreams what love is
worth,
Who casts it to new-comers?

XII.

" Such love's a cowslip-ball to fling,—
A moment's pretty pastime:
I give . . . all me, if any thing,
The first time and the last time.

XIII.

" Dear neighbor of the trellised house,
A man should murmur never,
Though treated worse than dog and
mouse,
Till doted on forever!"

MY HEART AND I.

I.

ENOUGH! we're tired, my heart and I.
We sit beside the headstone thus,
And wish that name were carved
for us.
The moss reprints more tenderly
The hard types of the mason's knife,
As heaven's sweet life renews
earth's life
With which we're tired, my heart
and I.

II.

You see we're tired, my heart and I.
We dealt with books, we trusted
men,
And in our own blood drenched the
pen,
As if such colors could not fly.

We walked too straight for for-
tune's end,
We loved too true to keep a friend:
At last we're tired, my heart and I.

III.

How tired we feel, my heart and I!
We seem of no use in the world;
Our fancies hang gray and uncurl'd
About men's eyes indifferently;
Our voice, which thrilled you so,
will let
You sleep; our tears are only wet;
What do we here, my heart and I?

IV.

So tired, so tired, my heart and I!
It was not thus in that old time
When Ralph sat with me 'neath the
lime
To watch the sunset from the sky.
" Dear love, you're looking tired,"
he said;
I, smiling at him, shook my head:
"Tis now we're tired, my heart and I.

V.

So tired, so tired, my heart and I!
Though now none takes me or his
arm
To fold me close, and kiss me warm
Till each quick breath end in a sigh
Of happy languor. Now, alone,
We lean upon this graveyard stone,
Uncheered, unkissed, my heart and I.

VI.

Tired out we are, my heart and I.
Suppose the world brought diadems
To tempt us, crusted with loose
gems
Of powers and pleasures? Let it try.
We scarcely care to look at even
A pretty child, or God's blue heaven,
We feel so tired, my heart and I.

VII.

Yet who complains? My heart and I?
In this abundant earth no doubt
Is little room for things worn out:
Disdain them, break them, throw
them by!
And if, before the days grew rough,
We once were loved, used, — well
enough
I think we've fared, my heart and I.

THE BEST THING IN THE WORLD.

WHAT's the best thing in the world ?
 June-rose, by May-dew impearled;
 Sweet south wind that means no rain;
 Truth, not cruel to a friend;
 Pleasure, not in haste to end;
 Beauty, not self-decked and curled
 Till its pride is over plain;
 Light, that never makes you wink;
 Memory, that gives no pain;
 Love, when, so, you're loved again.
 — What's the best thing in the world ?
 — Something out of it, I think.

WHERE'S AGNES ?

I.

NAY, if I had come back so,
 And found her dead in her grave,
 And if a friend I know
 Had said, " Be strong, nor rave;
 She lies there, dead below :

II.

" I saw her, I who speak,
 White, stiff, the face one blank :
 The blue shade came to her cheek
 Before they nailed the plank; —
 For she had been dead a week; —

III.

Why, if he had spoken so,
 I might have believed the thing.
 Although her look, although
 Her step, laugh, voice's ring,
 Lived in me still as they do.

IV.

But dead that other way,
 Corrupted thus and lost ?
 That sort of worm in the clay ?
 I cannot count the cost,
 That I should rise and pay

V.

My Agnes false ? such shame ?
 She ? Rather be it said
 That the pure saint of her name
 Has stood there in her stead,
 And tricked you to this blame.

VI.

Her very gown, her cloak,
 Fell chastely: no disguise,
 But expression ! while she broke
 With her clear gray morning-eyes
 Full upon me, and then spoke.

VII.

She wore her hair away
 From her forehead, like a cloud
 Which a little wind in May
 Peels off finely; disallowed,
 Though bright enough to stay.

VIII.

For the heavens must have the place
 To themselves, to use and shine in,
 As her soul would have her face
 To press through upon mine, in
 That orb of angel grace.

IX.

Had she any fault at all,
 'Twas having none, I thought too—
 There seemed a sort of thrall;
 As she felt her shadow ought to
 Fall straight upon the wall.

X.

Her sweetness strained the sense
 Of common life and duty;
 And every day's expense
 Of moving in such beauty
 Required, almost, defence.

XI.

What good, I thought, is done
 By such sweet things, if any ?
 This world smells ill i' the sun
 Though the garden-flowers are
 many, —
 She is only one.

XII.

Can a voice so low and soft
 Take open actual part
 With Right, — maintain aloft
 Pure truth in life or art,
 Vexed always, wounded oft ? —

XIII.

She fit, with that fair pose
 Which melts from curve to curve,
 To stand, run, work with those
 Who wrestle and deserve,
 And speak plain without glaze ?

XIV.

But I turned round on my fear
Defiant, disagreeing —
What if God has set her here
Less for action than for being? —
For the eye and for the ear.

XV.

Just to show what beauty may,
Just to prove what music can, —
And then to die away
From the presence of a man
Who shall learn henceforth to pray?

XVI.

As a door left half ajar
In heaven would make him think
How heavenly-different are
Things glanced at through the chink,
Till he pined from near to far.

XVII.

That door could lead to hell?
That shining merely meant
Damnation? What! She fell
Like a woman, who was sent
Like an angel, by a spell?

XVIII.

She, who scarcely trod the earth,
Turned mere dirt? My Agnes, —
mine!
Called so! felt of too much worth
To be used so! too divine
To be breathed near, and so forth!

XIX.

Why, I dared not name a sin
In her presence: I went round,
Clipped its name, and shut it in
Some mysterious crystal sound, —
Changed the dagger for the pin.

XX.

Now you name herself *that word*?
O my Agnes! O my saint!
Then the great joys of the Lord.
Do not last? Then all this paint
Runs off nature? leaves a board?

XXI.

Who's dead here? No, not she:
Rather I! or whence this damp
Cold corruption's misery?
While my very mourners stamp
Closer in the clods on me.

XXII.

And my mouth is full of dust
Till I cannot speak and curse —
Speak and damn him . . . "Blame's
unjust"?
Sin blots out the universe,
All because she would and must?

XXIII.

She, my white rose, dropping off
The high rose-tree branch! and not
That the night-wind blew too rough,
Or the noon-sun burnt too hot,
But, that being a rose — 'twas enough!

XXIV.

Then henceforth may earth grow
trees!
No more roses! — hard straight
lines
To score lies out! none of these
Fluctuant curves, but firs and
pines,
Poplars, cedars, cypresses!

DE PROFUNDIS.

I.

The face, which, duly as the sun,
Rose up for me with life begun,
To mark all bright hours of the day
With hourly love, is dimmed away, —
And yet my days go on, go on.

II.

The tongue, which, like a stream,
could run
Smooth music from the roughest stone,
And every morning with "Good-day,"
Make each day good, is hushed away, —
And yet my days go on, go on.

III.

The heart, which, like a staff, was one
For mine to lean and rest upon,
The strongest on the longest day
With steadfast love, is caught
away, —
And yet my days go on, go on.

IV.

And cold before my summer's done,
And deaf in Nature's general tune,
And fallen too low for special fear,
And here, with hope no longer here,—
While the tears drop, my days go on.

V.

The world goes whispering to its own,
"This anguish pierces to the bone;"
And tender friends go sighing round,
"What love can ever cure this
wound?"
My days go on, my days go on.

VI.

The past rolls forward on the sun,
And makes all night. O dreams begun,
Not to be ended! Ended bliss,
And life that will not end in this!—
My days go on, my days go on.

VII.

Breath freezes on my lips to moan:
As one alone, once not alone,
I sit and knock at Nature's door,
Heart-lame, heart-hungry, very poor,
Whose desolated days go on.

VIII.

I knock and cry, Undone, undone!
Is there no help, no comfort, — none?
No gleaning in the wide wheat-plains
Where others drive their loaded
wains? —
My vacant days go on, go on.

IX.

This Nature, though the snows be
down,
Thinks kindly of the bird of June:
The little red hip on the tree
Is ripe for such. What is for me
Whose days so winterly go on?

X.

No bird am I to sing in June,
And dare not ask an equal boon.
Good nests and berries red are Na-
ture's
To give away to better creatures,—
And yet my days go on, go on.

XI.

I ask less kindness to be done,—
Only to loose these pilgrim-shoon,
(Too early worn and grimed) with
sweet
Cool deathly touch to these tired feet,
Till days go out which now go on.

XII.

Only to lift the turf unmown
From off the earth where it has
grown,
Some cubit-space, and say, "Behold!
Creep in, poor heart, beneath that
fold,
Forgetting how the days go on."

XIII.

What harm would that do? Green
anon
The sward would quicken, overshone
By skies as blue; and crickets might
Have leave to chirp there day and
night
While my new rest went on, went on.

XIV.

From gracious Nature have I won
Such liberal bounty? may I run
So, lizard-like, within her side,
And there be safe, who now am tried
By days that painfully go on?

XV.

— A Voice reproves me thereupon,
More sweet than Nature's when the
drone
Of bees is sweetest, and more deep
Than when the rivers overleap
The shuddering pines, and thunder
on.

XVI.

God's voice, not Nature's! Night
and noon
He sits upon the great white throne,
And listens for the creatures' praise.
What babble we of days and days?
The Dayspring He, whose days go on.

XVII.

He reigns above, he reigns alone;
Systems burn out, and leave his
throne;
Fair mists of seraphs melt and fall
Around him, changeless amid all,—
Ancient of days, whose days go on.

XVIII.

He reigns below, he reigns alone,
And, having life in love foregone
Beneath the crown of sovran thorns
He reigns the jealous God. Who
 mourns
Or rules with him, while days go on?

XIX.

By anguish which made pale the sun,
I hear him charge his saints that none
Among his creatures anywhere
Blaspheme against him with despair,
However darkly days go on.

XX.

Take from my head the 'thorn-wreath
brown'
No mortal grief deserves that crown.
O supreme love, chief misery,
The sharp regalia are for THEE
Whose days eternally go on!

XXI.

For us, whatever's undergone,
Thou knowest, wildest, what is done.
Grief may be joy misunderstood:
Only the Good discerns the good.
I trust Thee while my days go on.

XXII.

Whatever's lost, it first was won;
We will not struggle nor impugn.
Perhaps the cup was broken here,
That heaven's new wine might show
 more clear.
I praise Thee while my days go on.

XXIII.

I praise Thee while my days go on;
I love Thee while my days go on;
Through dark and dearth, through
 fire and frost,
With emptied arms and treasure lost,
I thank Thee while my days go on.

XXIV.

And having in thy life-depth thrown
Being and suffering (which are one),
As a child drops his pebble small
Down some deep well, and hears it
 fall
Smiling,—so I. THY DAYS GO ON.

A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT.

WHAT was he doing, the great god
Pan,
 Down in the reeds by the river?
Spreading ruin, and scattering ban,
Splashing and paddling with hoofs of
 a goat,
And breaking the golden lilies afloat
With the dragon-fly on the river.

II.

He tore out a reed, the great god Pan,
From the deep, cool bed of the
river.
The limpid water turbidly ran,
And the broken lilies a dying lay,
And the dragon-fly had fled away,
 Ere he brought it out of the river.

III.

High on the shore sat the great god
Pan,
 While turbidly flowed the river,
And hacked and hewed as a great god
can,
With his hard bleak steel at the pa-
tient reed,
Till there was not a sign of the leaf
 indeed
To prove it fresh from the river.

IV.

He cut it short, did the great god
Pan,
(How tall it stood in the river!)
Then drew the pith, like the heart of
 a man,
Steadily from the outside ring,
And notched the poor, dry, empty
 thing
In holes as he sat by the river.

V.

"This is the way," laughed the great
god Pan,
(Laughed while he sat by the river.)
"The only way, since gods began
To make sweet music, they could suc-
ceed."
Then, dropping his mouth to a hole in
the reed,
He blew in power by the river.

VI.

Sweet, sweet, sweet, O Pan,
 Piercing sweet by the river !
 Blinding sweet, O great god Pan
 The sun on the hill forgot to die,
 And the lilies revived, and the dragon-
 fly
 Came back to dream on the river.

VII.

Yet half a beast is the great god Pan,
 To laugh as he sits by the river,
 Making a poet out of a man:
 The true gods sigh for the cost and
 pain,—
 For the reed which grows nevermore
 again
 As a reed with the reeds in the
 river.

FIRST NEWS FROM VILLA-
FRANCA.

I.

Peace, peace, peace, do you say ?
 What ! — with the enemy's guns in
 our ears ?
 With the country's wrong not ren-
 dered back ?
 What ! — while Austria stands at bay
 In Mantua, and our Venice bears
 The cursed flag of the yellow and
 black ?

II.

Peace, peace, peace, do you say ?
 And this the Mincio ? Where's the
 fleet,
 And where's the sea ? Are we all
 blind
 Or mad with the blood shed yester-
 day,
 Ignoring Italy under our feet,
 And seeing things before, behind ?

III.

Peace, peace, peace, do you say ?
 What ! — uncontested, undenied ?
 Because we triumph, we succumb ?
 A pair of emperors stand in the way,
 (One of whom is a man, beside)
 To sign and seal our cannons dumb ?

IV.

No, not Napoleon ! — he who mused
 At Paris, and at Milan spake,
 And at Solferino led the fight:
 Not he we trusted, honored, used
 Our hopes and hearts for . . . till
 they break —
 Even so, you tell us . . . in his
 sight.

V.

Peace, peace, is still your word ?
 We say you lie then ! — that is
 plain.
 There is no peace, and shall be
 none.
 Our very dead would cry, " Absurd ! "
 And clamor that they died in vain,
 And whine to come back to the sun.

VI.

Hush ! more reverence for the dead !
 They've done the most for Italy
 Evermore since the earth was fair.
 Now would that we had died instead.
 Still dreaming peace meant liberty,
 And did not, could not, mean de-
 spair.

VII.

Peace, you say ? — yes, peace, in
 truth !
 But such a peace as the ear can
 achieve
 'Twixt the rifle's click and the rush
 of the ball,
 'Twixt the tiger's spring and the
 crunch of the tooth,
 'Twixt the dying atheist's negative
 And God's face — waiting, after all !

KING VICTOR EMANUEL EN-
TERING FLORENCE, APRIL,
1860.

I.

King of us all, we cried to thee, cried
 to thee,
 Trampled to earth by the beasts im-
 pure,
 Dragged by the chariots which
 shame as they roll :

The dust of our torment far and wide
to thee
Went up, darkening thy royal soul.
Be witness, Cavour,
That the king was sad for the people
in thrall,
This king of us all !

II.

King, we cried to thee ! Strong in
replying,
Thy word and thy sword sprang
rapid and sure,
Cleaving our way to a nation's
place.
Oh first soldier of Italy ! — crying
Now grateful, exultant, we look in
thy face.
Be witness, Cavour,
That, freedom's first soldier, the freed
should call
First king of them all !

III.

This is our beautiful Italy's birth-
day:
High-thoughted souls, whether
many or fewer,
Bring her the gift, and wish her the
good,
While Heaven presents on this sunny
earth-day
The noble king to the land re-
newed.
Be witness, Cavour !
Roar, cannon-mouths ! Proclaim, in-
stall
The king of us all !

IV.

Grave he rides through the Florence
gateway,
Clenching his face into calm, to im-
mure
His struggling heart till it half dis-
appears:
If he relaxed for a moment, straight-
way
He would break out into passionate
tears —
(Be witness, Cavour !)
While rings the cry without interval,
"Live, king of us all ! "

V.

Cry, free peoples ! Honor the nation
By crowning the true man; and
none is truer:

Pisa is here, and Livorno is here,
And thousands of faces, in wild exul-
tation,
Burn over the windows to feel him
near, —
(Be witness, Cavour !)
Burn over from terrace, roof, window,
and wall,
On this king of us all.

VI.

Grave ! A good man's ever the
graver
For bearing a nation's trust secure;
And he, he thinks of the heart, be-
side,
Which broke for Italy, failing to save
her,
And pining away by Oporto's tide;
Be witness, Cavour,
That he thinks of his vow on that
royal pall —
This king of us all.

VII.

Flowers, flowers, from the flowery
city !
Such innocent thanks for a deed so
pure,
As, melting away for joy into flow-
ers,
The nation invites him to enter his
Pitti,
And evermore reign in this Florence
of ours.
Be witness, Cavour !
He'll stand where the reptiles were
used to crawl —
This king of us all.

VIII.

Grave, as the manner of noble men
is —
Deeds unfinished will weigh on the
doer;
And, baring his head to those crape-
veiled flags,
He bows to the grief of the South and
Venice.
Oh, riddle the last of the yellow to
rags,
And swear by Cavour
That the king shall reign where the
tyrants fall,
True king of us all !

THE SWORD OF CASTRUCIO CASTRACANI.

"Questa è per me."
KING VICTOR EMANUEL.

I.

WHEN Victor Emanuel, the king,
Went down to his Lucca that day,
The people, each vaunting the thing
As he gave it, gave all things
away, —

In a burst of fierce gratitude, say,
As they tore out their hearts for the
king.

II.

— Gave the green forest-walk on the
wall,
With the Apennine blue through
the trees;
Gave the palaces, churches, and all
The great pictures which burn out
of these:
But the eyes of the king seemed to
freeze
As he gazed upon ceiling and wall.

III.

“Good!” said the king as he passed.
Was he cold to the arts? — or else
cloy
To possession? or crossed, at the last,
(Whispered some) by the vote in
Savoy?
Shout! Love him enough for his
joy!
“Good!” said the king as he passed.

IV.

He travelling the whole day through
flowers,
And protesting amenities, found
At Pistoia, betwixt the two showers
Of red roses, the “Orphans” (re-
nowned
As the heirs of Puccini), who wound
With a sword through the crowd and
the flowers.

V.

“ ‘Tis the sword of Castruccio, O
king, —
In that strife of intestinal hate,
Very famous! Accept what we
bring,

We who cannot be sons, by our fate,
Rendered citizens by thee of late,
And endowed with a country and
king.

VI.

“Read! Puccini has willed that this
sword
(Which once made in an ignorant
feud
Many orphans) remain in our ward
Till some patriot its pure civic blood
Wipe away in the foe’s, and make
good,
In delivering the land by the sword.”

VII.

Then the king exclaimed, “This is for
me!”
And he dashed out his hand on the
hilt,
While his blue eye shot fire openly,
And his heart overboiled till it spilt
A hot prayer: “God! the rest as
thou wilt,
But grant me this! — *This is for me!*”

VIII.

O Victor Emanuel, the king,
The sword is for *thee*, and the deed,
And nought for the alien, next spring,
Nought for Hapsburg and Bourbon
agreed —
But, for us, a great Italy freed,
With a hero to head us, — our king!

SUMMING UP IN ITALY.

INSCRIBED TO INTELLIGENT PUB-
LICS OUT OF IT.

I.

OBSERVE how it will be at last,
When our Italy stands at full stat-
ure,
A year ago tied down so fast
That the cord cut the quick of her
nature!
You’ll honor the deed and its scope,
Then in logical sequence upon it,
Will use up the remnants of rope
By hanging the men who have done
it.

II.

The speech in the Commons, which
hits you.
A sketch off, how dungeons must
feel;
The official despatch, which commits
you
From stamping out groans with
your heel;
Suggestions in journal or book for
Good efforts are praised as is
meet,—
But what in this world can men look
for,
Who only achieve and complete?

III.

True, you've praise for the fireman
who sets his
Brave face to the axe of the flame,
Disappears in the smoke, and then
fetches
A babe down, or idiot that's lame,—
For the hoor even, who rescues
through pity
A sheep from the brute who would
kick it:
But savors of nations! — 'tis pretty,
And doubtful: they *may* be so
wicked:

IV.

Azeglio, Farini, Mamiani,
Ricasoli, — doubt by the dozen! —
here's
Pepoli too, and Cipriani,
Imperial cousins and cozeners —
Arese, Laiatico, — courtly
Of manners, if stringent of r' outh:
Garibaldi! we'll come to him shortly
(As soon as he ends in the South)

V.

Napoleon — as strong as ter armis,
Corrupt as seven devils — a fact
You accede to, then seek where the
harm is
Drained off from the man to his act,
And find — a free nation! Suppose
Some hell-brood in Eder's sweet
greenery,
Convoked for creating — a rose!
Would it suit the infernal ma-
chinery?

VI.

Cavour — to the despot's desire,
Who his own thought so craftily
marries —
What is he but just a thin wire
For conducting the lightning from
Paris?
Yes, write down the two as compeers,
Confessing (you would not permit a *
lie)
He bore up his Piedmont ten years
Till she suddenly smiled, and was
Italy.

VII.

And the king, with that "stain on
his scutcheon,"¹
Savoy — as the calumny runs;
(If it be not his blood, — with his
clutch on
The sword, and his face to the guns).
O first, where the battle-storm gath-
ers,
O loyal of heart on the throne,
Let those keep the "graves of their
fathers,"
Who quail in a nerve from their
own!

VIII.

For *thee* — through the dim Hades-
portal
The dream of a voice — "Blessed
thou
Who hast made all thy race twice im-
mortal!
No need of the sepulchres now!
— Left to Bourbons^{*} and Hapsburgs,
who festere
Above-ground with worm-eaten
souls,
While the ghost of some pale feudal
jester
Before them strews treaties in
holes."

IX.

But hush! — am I dreaming a poem
Of Hades, Heaven, Justice? Not I;
I began too far off, in my proem,
With what men believe and deny;
And on earth, whatsoever the need is,
(To sum up as thoughtful reviewers)
The moral of every great deed is —
The virtue of slandering the doers.

* Blue Book. Diplomatical Correspond-
ence.

"DIED . . . "

THE "TIMES" OBITUARY.

I.

WHAT shall we add now? He is dead.

And I who praise, and you who blame,

With wash of words across his name,
Find suddenly declared instead —
"On Sunday, third of August, dead."

II.

Which stops the whole we talked today,

I, quickened to a plausible glance
At his large general tolerance
By common people's narrow way,
Stopped short in praising. Dead, they say.

III.

And you, who had just put in a sort
Of cold deduction — "rather, large
Through weakness of the continent
marge,
Than greatness of the thing contained" —
Broke off. Dead! — there, you stood restrained.

IV.

As if we had talked in following one
Up some long gallery. "Would you choose
An air like that? The gait is loose,
Or noble." Sudden in the sun
An oublieite winks. Where is he?
Gone.

V.

Dead. Man's "I was," by God's "I am" —
All hero-worship comes to that.
High heart, high thought, high fame,
as flat
As a gravestone. Bring your *Jacet ianum* —
The epitaph's an epigram.

VI.

Dead. There's an answer to arrest
All carping. Dust's his natural place?

He'll let the flies buzz round his face,
And, though you slander, not protest?
— From such an one exact the best?

VII.

Opinions gold or brass are null.
We chuck our flattery or abuse,
Called Caesar's due, as Charon's dues,

I' the teeth of some dead sage or fool,
To mend the grinning of a skull.

VIII.

Be abstinent in praise and blame.
The man's still mortal, who stands first,
And mortal only, if last and worst.
Then slowly lift so frail a fame,
Or softly drop so poor a shame.

THE FORCED RECRUIT.

SOLFERINO, 1859.

I.

In the ranks of the Austrian you found him,
He died with his face to you all;
Yet bury him here where around him You honor your bravest that fall.

II.

Venetian, fair-featured and slender,
He was shot to death in his youth,
With a smile on his lips over-tender
For any mere soldier's dead mouth.

III.

No stranger, and yet not a traitor,
Though alien the cloth on his breast,
Underneath it how seldom a greater Young heart has a shot sent to rest!

IV.

By your enemy tortured and goaded
To march with them, stand in their file,
His musket (see) never was loaded,
He facing your guns with that smile!

V.

As orphans yearn on to their mothers,
He yearned to your patriot bands; —
"Let me die for our Italy, brothers,
If not in your ranks, by your hands!"

VI.

"Aim straightly, fire steadily! spare me
A ball in the body which may
Deliver my heart here, and tear me
This badge of the Austrian away!"

VII.

So thought he, so died he this morning.
What then? many others have died.
Ay, but easy for men to die scorning
The death-stroke, who fought side
by side—

VIII.

One tricolor floating above them;
Struck down 'mid triumphant acclaims
Of an Italy rescued to love them
And blazon the brass with their names.

IX.

But he, without witness or honor,
Mixed, shamed in his country's regard,
With the tyrants who march in upon her,
Died faithful and passive: 'twas hard.

X.

'Twas sublime. In a cruel restriction
Cut off from the guerdon of sons,
With most filial obedience, conviction,
His soul kissed the lips of her guns.

XI.

That moves you? Nay, grudge not
to show it,
While digging a grave for him here:
The others who died, says your poet,
Have glory,—let him have a tear.

GARIBALDI.

I.

He bent his head upon his breast
Wherein his lion-heart lay sick:—
"Perhaps we are not ill repaid;
Perhaps this is not a true test;

Perhaps this was not a foul trick;
Perhaps none wronged, and none betrayed.

II.

"Perhaps the people's vote which
here
United, there may disunite,
And both be lawful as they think;
Perhaps a patriot statesman, dear
For chartering nations, can with
right
Disfranchise those who hold the
ink.

III.

"Perhaps men's wisdom is not craft;
Men's greatness, not a selfish greed;
Men's justice, not the safer side;
Perhaps even women, when they
laughed,
Wept, thanked us that the land was
freed,
Not wholly (though they kissed us)
lied.

IV.

"Perhaps no more than this we
meant,
When up at Austria's guns we flew,
And quenched them with a cry
apiece,
Italia! — Yet a dream was sent . . .
The little house my father knew,
The olives and the palms of Nice."

V.

He paused, and drew his sword out
slow,
Then pored upon the blade intent,
As if to read some written thing;
While many murmured, "He will go
In that despairing sentiment
And break his sword before the
king."

VI.

He poring still upon the blade,
His large lid quivered, something
fell.
"Perhaps," he said, "I was not
born
With such fine brains to treat and
trade,—
And, if a woman knew it well,
Her falsehood only meant her scorn.

VII.

Yet through Varese's cannon-smoke,
My eye saw clear; men feared this
man
At Como, where this sword could
seal
Death's protocol with every stroke:
And now . . . the drop there scarce-
ly can
Impair the keenness of the steel.

VIII.

"So man and sword may have their
use;
And if the soil beneath my foot
In valor's act is forfeited,
I'll strike the harder, take my dues
Out nobler, and all loss confute
From ampler heavens above my
head.

IX.

"My king, King Victor, I am thine!
So much Nicce-dust as what I am
(To make our Italy) must cleave.
Forgive that." Forward with a sign
He went.

You've seen the telegram?
Palermo's taken, we believe.

ONLY A CURL.

I.

FRIENDS of faces unknown and a land
Unvisited over the sea,
Who tell me how lonely you stand
With a single gold curl in the hand
Held up to be looked at by me,—

II.

While you ask me to ponder and say
What a father and mother can do,
With the bright fellow-locks put away
Out of reach, beyond kiss, in the clay
Where the violets press nearer than
you:

III.

Shall I speak like a poet, or run
Into weak woman's tears for relief?
O children! — I never lost one,—
Yet my arm's round my own little
son,
And love knows the secret of grief.

IV.

And I feel what it must be and is,
When God draws a new angel so
Through the house of a man up to
his,
With a murmur of music you miss,
And a rapture of light you forego.

V.

How you think, staring on at the
door,
Where the face of your angel flashed
in,
That its brightness, familiar before,
Burns off from you ever the more
For the dark of your sorrow and
sin.

VI.

"God lent him and takes him," you
sigh;
—Nay, there let me break with
your pain:
God's generous in giving, say I;
And the thing which he gives, I deny
That he ever can take back again.

VII.

He gives what he gives. I appeal
To all who bear babes,— in the hour
When the veil of the body we feel
Rent round us, — while torments re-
veal
The motherhood's advent in power,

VIII.

And the babe cries! — has each of us
known
By apocalypse (God being there
Full in nature) the child is our own,
Life of life, love of love, moan of
moan,
Through all changes, all times,
everywhere.

IX.

He's ours and forever. Believe,
O father! — O mother, look back
To the first love's assurance! To
give
Means with God not to tempt or de-
ceive
With a cup thrust in Benjamin's
sack.

x.

He gives what he gives. Be content !
He resumes nothing given, be sure !
God lend ? Where the usurers lent
In his temple, indignant he went
And scourged away all those impure.

xi.

He lends not, but gives to the end,
As he loves to the end. If it seem
That he draws back a gift, comprehend
'Tis to add to it rather, — amend,
And finish it up to your dream, —

xii.

Or keep, as a mother will toys
Too costly, though given by herself,
Till the room shall be stiller from
noise,
And the children more fit for such
joys
Kept over their heads on the shelf.

xiii.

So look up, friends ! you, who indeed
Have possessed in your house a
sweet piecœ
Of the heaven which men strive for,
must need
Be more earnest than others are, —
speed
Where they loiter, persist where
they cease.

xiv.

You know how one angel smiles
there.
Then weep not. 'Tis easy for you
To be drawn by a single gold hair
Of that curl, from earth's storm and
despair,
To the safe place above us. Adieu.

A VIEW ACROSS THE
ROMAN CAMPAGNA.

1861.

I.

OVER the dumb Campagna-sea,
Out in the offing through mist and
rain,
St. Peter's Church heaves silently

Like a mighty ship in pain,
Facing the tempest with struggle
and strain.

II.

Motionless waifs of ruined towers,
Soundless breakers of desolate land :
The sullen surf of the mist devours
That mountain-range upon either
hand,
Eaten away from its outline grand.

III.

And over the dumb Campagna-sea
Where the ship of the Church
heaves on to wreck,
Alone and silent as God must be,
The Christ walks. Ay, but Peter's
neck
Is stiff to turn on the foundering
deck.

IV.

Peter, Peter ! if such be thy name,
Now leave the ship for another to
steer,
And, proving thy faith evermore the
same,
Come forth, tread out through the
dark and drear,
Since He who walks on the sea is
here.

V.

Peter, Peter ! He does not speak ;
He is not as rash as in old Galilee:
Safer a ship, though it toss and leak,
Than a reeling foot on a rolling sea !
And he's got to be round in the
girth, thinks he.

VI.

Peter, Peter ! He does not stir;
His nets are heavy with silver fish;
He reckons his gains, and is keen to
infer
— "The broil on the shore, if the
Lord should wish:
But the sturgeon goes to the Caesar's
dish."

VII.

Peter, Peter ! thou fisher of men,
Fisher of fish wouldest thou live in-
stead ?
Haggling for pence with the other
ten,
Cheating the market at so much a
head,
Griping the bag of the traitor dead ?

VIII.

At the triple crow of the Gallic cock
 Thou weep'st not, thou, though
 thine eyes be dazed:
 What bird comes next in the tempest-
 shock?
 — Vultures I see, — as when Romu-
 lus gazed, —
 To inaugurate Rome for a world
 amazed!

THE KING'S GIFT.

I.

TERESA, ah, Teresita !
 Now what has the messenger brought
 her,
 Our Garibaldi's young daughter,
 To make her stop short in her sing-
 ing ?
 Will she not once more repeat a
 Verse from that hymn of our hero's,
 Setting the souls of us ringing ?
 Break off the song where the tear
 rose ?
 Ah, Teresita !

II.

A young thing, mark, is Teresa :
 Her eyes have caught fire, to be sure,
 in
 That necklace of jewels from Turin,
 Till blind their regard to us men is.
 But still she remembers to raise a
 Sly look to her father, and note —
 " Could she sing on as well about
 Venice,
 Yet wear such a flame at her throat ?
 Decide for Teresa."

III.

Teresa, ah, Teresita !
 His right hand has paused on her
 head;
 " Accept it, my daughter," he said;
 " Ay, wear it, true child of thy
 mother !
 Then sing, till all start to their feet, a
 New verse ever bolder and freer !
 King Victor's no king like another,
 But verily noble as we are,
 Child, Teresita ! "

PARTING LOVERS.

SIENA, 1860.

I.

I LOVE thee, love thee, Giulio;
 Some call me cold, and some de-
 mure;
 And if thou hast ever guessed that so
 I loved thee . . . well, the proof
 was poor,
 And no one could be sure.

II.

Before thy song (with shifted rhymes
 To suit my name) did I undo
 The persian ? If it stirred sometimes,
 Thou hast not seen a hand push
 through
 A foolish flower or two.

III.

My mother, listening to my sleep,
 Heard nothing but a sigh at night, —
 The short sigh rippling on the deep,
 When hearts run out of breath and
 sight
 Of men, to God's clear light.

IV.

When others named thee, — thought
 thy brows
 Were straight, thy smile was ten-
 der — "Here
 He comes between the vineyard
 rows!"
 I said not " Ay," nor waited, dear,
 To feel thee step too near.

V.

I left such things to bolder girls, —
 Olivia or Clotilda. Nay,
 When that Clotilda, through her curls,
 Held both thine eyes in hers one
 day,
 I marvelled, let me say.

VI.

I could not try the woman's trick:
 Between us straightway fell the
 blush
 Which kept me separate, blind, and
 sick.
 A wind came with thee in a flush,
 As blown thro' Sinai's bush.

VII.

But now that Italy invokes
Her young men to go forth, and
chase
The foe or perish,—nothing chokes
My voice, or drives me from the
place.
I look thee in the face.

VIII.

I love thee! It is understood,
Confest; I do not shrink or start.
No blushes! all my body's blood
Has gone to greateren this poor heart.
That, loving, we may part.

IX.

Our Italy invokes the youth
To die if need be. Still there's
room,
Though earth is strained with dead in
truth:
Since twice the lilies were in bloom
They have not grudged a tomb.

X.

And many a plighted maid and wife
And mother, who can say, since
then,
“My country,”—cannot say through
life
“My son,” “my spouse,” “my
flower of men,”
And not weep dumb again.

XI.

Heroic males the country bears;
But daughters give up more than
sons:
Flags wave, drums beat, and un-
awares
You flash your souls out with the
guns,
And take your heaven at once.

XII.

But we! we empty heart and home
Of life's life, love! We bear to
think
You're gone, to feel you may not
come,
To hear the door-latch stir and
clink,
Yet no more you!... nor
sink.

XIII.

Dear God! when Italy is one,
Complete, content from bound to
bound,
Suppose, for my share, earth's un-
done
By one grave in't!—as one small
wound
Will kill a man, 'tis found.

XIV.

What then? If love's delight must
end,
At least we'll clear its truth from
flaws.
I love thee, love thee, sweetest
friend!
Now take my sweetest without
pause,
And help the nation's cause.

XVI.

And thus, of noble Italy
We'll both be worthy! Let her
show
The future how we made her free,
Not sparing life . . . nor Giulio,
Nor this—this heartbreak!
Go.

MOTIHER AND POET.

TURIN, AFTER NEWS FROM GAETA,
1861.

I.

DEAD! One of them shot by the sea
in the east,
And one of them shot in the west
by the sea.
Dead! both my boys! When you sit
at the feast,
And are wanting a great song for
Italy free,
Let none look at me.

II.

Yet I was a poetess only last year,
And good at my art, for a woman,
men said;
But *this* woman, *this*, who is agonized
here,
— The east sea and west sea rhyme
on her head
Forever instead.

III.

What art can a woman be good at?
Oh, vain!
What art is she good at, but hurting
her breast
With the milk-teeth of babes, and a
smile at the pain?
Ah, boys, how you hurt! you were
strong as you prest,
And I proud by that test.

IV.

What art's for a woman? To hold
on her knees
Both darlings! to feel all their
arms round her throat,
Cling, strangle a little! to sew by
degrees,
And broider the long-clothes and
neat little cont;
To dream and to dote.

V.

To teach them. . . . It stings there!
I made them indeed
Speak plain the word *country*. *I*
taught them, no doubt,
That a country's a thing men should
die for at need.
I prated of liberty, rights, and
about
The tyrant cast out.

VI.

And when their eyes flashed . . . O
my beautiful eyes! . . .
I exulted; nay, let them go forth at
the wheels
Of the guns, and denied not. But
then the surprise
When one sits quite alone! Then
one weeps, then one kneels
God, how the house feels!

VII.

At first, happy news came, in gay
letters moiled
With my kisses, of camp-life and
glory, and how
They both loved me; and, soon com-
ing home to be spoilt,
In return would fan off every fly
from my brow
With their green laurel-bough.

VIII.

Then was triumph at Turin: "An-
cona was free!"
And some one came out of the
cheers in the street,
With a face pale as stone, to say
something to me.
My Guido was dead! I fell down
at his feet,
While they cheered in the street.

IX.

I bore it, friends soothed me; my
grief looked sublime
As the ransom of Italy. One boy
remained
To be leant on and walked with, re-
calling the time
When the first grew immortal,
while both of us strained
To the height he had gained.

X.

And letters still came, shorter, sadder,
more strong,
Writ now but in one hand. "I
was not to faint,—
One loved me for two, would be with
me ere long:
And *Viva l'Italia!* — he died for,
our saint,
Who forbids our complaint."

XI.

My Nanni would add, "he was safe,
and aware
Of a presence that turned off the
balls, — was imprest
It was Guido himself, who knew
what I could bear,
And how 'twas impossible, quite
dispossest,
To live on for the rest."

XII.

On which, without pause, up the tele-
graph-line
Swept smoothly the next news
from Gaeta, — *Shot*.
Tell his mother. Ah, ah! "his,"
"their" mother, not "mine:"
No voice says, "*My mother,*" again
to me. What!
You think Guido forgot?

XIII.

Are souls straight so happy, that,
dizzy with heaven,
They drop earth's affections, con-
ceive not of woe?
I think not. Themselves were too
lately forgiven
Through THAT Love and Sorrow
which reconciled so
The Above and Below

XIV.

O Christ of the five wounds, who
look'dst through the dark
To the face of thy mother! con-
sider, I pray,
How we common mothers stand deso-
late, mark,
Whose sons, not being Christs, die
with eyes turned away,
And no last word to say.

XV.

Both boys dead? but that's out of
nature. We all
Have been patriots, yet each house
must always keep one.
'Twere imbecile, hewing out roads to
a wall;
And, when Italy's made, for what
end is it done,
If we have not a son?

XVI.

Ah, ah, ah! when Gaeta's taken,
what then?
When the fair wicked queen sits no
more at her sport
Of the fire-balls of death crashing
souls out of men?
When the guns of Cavalli with
final retort
Have cut the game short?

XVII.

When Venice and Rome keep their
new jubilee;
When your flag takes all heaven for
its white, green, and red;
When you have your country from
mountain to sea;
When King Victor has Italy's
crown on his head,
(And I have my dead), —

XVIII.

What then? Do not mock me. Ah,
ring your bells low,
And burn your lights faintly! My
country is *there*,
Above the star pricked by the last
peak of snow:
My Italy's THERE, with my brave
civic pair
To disfranchise despair!

XIX.

Forgive me. Some women bear chil-
dren in strength,
And bite back the cry of their pain
in self-scorning;
But the birth-pangs of nations will
wring us at length
Into wail such as this; and we sit
on forlorn
When the man-child is born.

XX.

Dead! One of them shot by the sea
in the east,
And one of them shot in the west
by the sea.
Both! both my boys! If in keeping
the feast
You want a great song for your
Italy free,
Let none look at me!

[This was Laura Savio of Turin, a poet-
ess and patriot, whose sons were killed at
Ancona and Gaeta.]

NATURE'S REMORSES.

ROME, 1861.

I.

Her soul was bred by a throne, and
fed
From the sucking-bottle used in her
race
On starch and water (for mother's
milk),
Which gives a larger growth instead),
And, out of the natural liberal
grace,
Was swaddled away in violet silk.

II.

And young and kind, and royally blind,
Forth she stepped from her palace-door
On three-piled carpet of compliments,
Curtains of incense drawn by the wind
In between her forevermore
And daylight issues of events.

III.

On she drew, as a queen might do,
To meet a dream of Italy,—
Of magical town and musical wave,
Where even a god, his amulet blue
Of shining sea, in an ecstasy,
Dropt and forgot in a nereid's cave.

IV.

Down she goes, as the soft wind blows,
To live more smoothly than mortals can,
To love and to reign as queen and wife,
To wear a crown that smells of a rose,
And still, with a sceptre as light as a fan,
Beat sweet time to the song of life.

V.

What is this? As quick as a kiss
Falls the smile from her girlish mouth!
The lion-people has left its lair,
Roaring along her garden of bliss,
And the fiery underworld of the South
Scorched a way to the upper air.

VI.

And a fire-stone ran in the form of a man,
Burningly, boundingly, fatal and fell,
Bowling the kingdom down!
Where was the king?
She had heard somewhat, since life began,
Of terrors on earth, and horrors in hell,
But never, never, of such a thing.

VII.

You think she dropped when her dream was stopped,
When the blotch of Bourbon blood inlay,
Lividly rank, her new lord's cheek?
Not so. Her high heart overtopped
The royal part she had come to play.
Only the men in that hour were weak.

VIII.

And twice a wife by her ravaged life,
And twice a queen by her kingdom lost,
She braved the shock and the counter-shock
Of hero and traitor, bullet and knife,
While Italy pushed, like a vengeful ghost,
That son of the Cursed from Gaeta's rock.

IX.

What will ye give her, who could not deliver,
German princesses? A laurel-wreath
All over-scored with your signatures?
Graces, Scrutinies, Highnesses ever?
Mock her not fresh from the truth of death,
Conscious of dignities higher than yours.

X.

What will ye put in your casket shut,
Ladies of Paris, in sympathy's name?
Guizot's daughter, what have you brought her?
Withered immortelles, long ago cut
For guilty dynasties perished in shame,
Putrid to memory, Guizot's daughter?

XI.

Ah, poor queen! so young and serene!
What shall we do for her, now hope's done,
Standing at Rome in these ruins old,
She too a ruin, and no more a queen?
Leave her that diadem made by the sun
Turning her hair to an innocent gold.

XII.

Ay! bring close to her, as 'twere a
rose to her,
Yon free child from an Apennine
city
Singing for Italy,—dumb in the
place!
Something like solace, let us suppose,
to her
Given, in that homage of wonder
and pity,
By his pure eyes to her beautiful
face.

XIII.

Nature, excluded, savagely brooded;
Ruined all queendom and dogmas
of state:
Then, in re-action remorseful and
mild,
Rescues the womanhood, nearly
eluded,
Shows her what's sweetest in wo-
manly fate—
Sunshine from heaven, and the
eyes of a child.

THE NORTH AND THE SOUTH.

[THE LAST POEM.]

ROME, MAY, 1861.

I.

"Now give us lands where the olives
grow,"
Cried the North to the South,
"Where the sun, with a golden
mouth, can blow
Blue bubbles of grapes down a vine-
yard-row!"
Cried the North to the South.
"Now give us men from the sunless
plain,"
Cried the South to the North,

"By need of work in the snow and
the rain,
Made strong, and brave by familiar
pain!"
Cried the South to the North.

II.

"Give lucider hills and intenser
seas,"
Said the North to the South,
"Since ever, by symbols and bright
degrees,
Art, childlike, climbs to the dear
Lord's knees,"
Said the North to the South.

"Give strenuous souls for belief and
prayer,"
Said the South to the North,
"That stand in the dark on the low-
est stair,
While affirming of God, 'He is cer-
tainly there,'"
Said the South to the North.

III.

"Yet, oh for the skies that are softer
and higher!"
Sighed the North to the South;
"For the flowers that blaze, and the
trees that aspire,
And the insects made of a song or a
fire!"
Sighed the North to the South.

"And oh for a seer to discern the
same!"
Sighed the South to the North;
"For a poet's tongue of baptismal
flame,
To call the tree or the flower by its
name!"
Sighed the South to the North.

IV.

The North sent therefore a man of
men
As a grace to the South;
And thus to Rome came Andersen.
—"Alas, but must you take him
again?"
Said the South to the North.

TRANSLATIONS.

FROM THEOCRITUS.

THE CYCLOPS.

(Idyl XI.)

AND so an easier life our Cyclops drew,
The ancient Polyphemus, who in youth
Loved Galatea while the manhood grew
Adown his cheeks, and darkened round his mouth.
No jot he cared for apples, olives, roses;
Love made him mad; the whole world was neglected,
The very sheep went backward to their closes
From out the fair green pastures, self-directed.
And singing Galatea, thus, he wore
The sunrise down along the weedy shore,
And pined alone, and felt the cruel wound
Beneath his heart, which Cypris' arrow bore,
With a deep pang: but, so, the cure was found;
And, sitting on a lofty rock, he cast
His eyes upon the sea, and sang at last:
"O whitest Galatea, can it be
That thou shouldst spurn me off who love thee so?
More white than curds, my girl, thou art to see,
More meek than lambs, more full of leaping glee
Than kids, and brighter than the early glow
On grapes that swell to ripen, — sour like thee!
Thou comest to me with the fragrant sleep,
And with the fragrant sleep thou goest from me;

Thou fiest . . . fiest as a frightened sheep
Flies the gray wolf! — yet love did overcome me,
So long! — I loved thee, maiden, first of all,
When down the hills (my mother fast beside thee)
I saw thee stray to pluck the summer-fall
Of hyacinth-bells, and went myself to guide thee;
And since my eyes have seen thee, they can leave thee
No more, from that day's light!
But thou . . . by Zeus,
Thou wilt not care for *that*, to let it grieve thee!
I know thee, fair one, why thou springest loose
From my arm round thee. Why? I tell thee, dear!
One shaggy eyebrow draws its smudging road
Straight through my ample front, from ear to ear;
One eye rolls underneath; and yawning, broad,
Flat nostrils feel the bulging lips too near.
Yet . . . ho, ho! — *I*, — whatever I appear, —
Do feed a thousand oxen! When I have done,
I milk the cows, and drink the milk that's best!
I lack no cheese, while summer keeps the sun;
And after, in the cold, it's ready prest!
And then, I know to sing, as there is none
Of all the Cyclops can, . . . a song of thee,
Sweet apple of my soul, on love's fair tree,
And of myself who love thee . . . till the west
Forgets the light, and all but I have rest.

I feed for thee, besides, eleven fair
does,
And all in fawn; and four tame
whelps of bears.
Come to me, sweet! thou shalt have
all of those
In change for love! I will not
halve the shares.
Leave the blue sea, with pure white
arms extended
To the dry shore; and, in my cave's
recess,
Thou shalt be gladder for the noon-
light ended;
For here be laurels, spiral cypresses,
Dark ivy, and a vine whose leaves
infold
Most luscious grapes; and here is
water cold,
The wooded Aetna pours down
through the trees
From the white snows, which gods
were scarce too bold
To drink in turn with nectar. Who
with these
Would choose the salt wave of the
lukewarm seas?
Nay, look on me! If I am hairy and
rough,
I have an oak's heart in me; there's
a fire
In these gray ashes which burns hot
enough;
And, when I burn for *thee*, I grudge
the pyre
No fuel . . . not my soul, nor this one
eye,
Most precious thing I have, because
thereby
I see thee, fairest! Out, alas! I
wish
My mother had borne me finned like
a fish,
That I might plunge down in the
ocean near thee,
And kiss thy glittering hand be-
tween the weeds,
If still thy face were turned; and I
would bear thee
Each lily white, and poppy fair that
bleeds
Its red heart down its leaves! — one
gift, for hours
Of summer, — one for winter; since
to cheer thee,
I could not bring at once all kinds of
flowers.
Even now, girl, now, I fain would
learn to swim,

If stranger in a ship sailed nigh, I
wis,
That I may know how sweet a thing
it is
To live down with you in the deep
and dim!
Come up, O Galatea, from the
ocean,
And, having come, forget again to
go!
As I, who sing out here my heart's
emotion,
Could sit forever. Come up from
below!
Come, keep my flocks beside me,
milk my kine;
Come, press my cheese, distract my
whey and curd!
Ah, mother! she alone . . . that
mother of mine . . .
Did wrong me sore! I blame her!
Not a word
Of kindly intercession did she ad-
dress
Thine ear with for my sake; and ne'er-
theless
She saw me wasting, wasting, day
by day:
Both head and feet were aching, I
will say,
All sick for grief, as I myself was
sick.
O Cyclops, Cyclops! whither hast
thou sent
Thy soul on fluttering wings? If
thou wert bent
On turning bowls, or pulling green
and thick
The sprouts to give thy lambkins,
thou wouldst make thee
A wiser Cyclops than for what we
take thee.
Milk dry the present! Why pursue
too quick
That future which is fugitive aright?
Thy Galatea thou shalt haply find,
Or else a maiden fairer and more
kind;
For many girls do call me through
the night,
And, as they call, do laugh out sil-
verly.
I, too, am something in the world,
I see!"

While thus the Cyclops love and
lambs did fold,
Ease came with song, he could not
buy with gold.

FROM APULEIUS.

PSYCHE GAZING ON CUPID.

(METAMORPH., Lib. IV.)

THEN Psyche, weak in body and soul,
put on
The cruelty of fate, in place of
strength:
She raised the lamp to see what
should be done,
And seized the steel, and was a man
at length
In courage, though a woman! Yes,
but when
The light fell on the bed whereby
she stood
To view the "beast" that lay there,
certes, then,
She saw the gentlest, sweetest beast
in wood,—
Even Cupid's self, the beauteous god!
more beauteous
For that sweet sleep across his eye-
lids dien.
The light the lady carried as she
viewed
Did blush for pleasure as it lighted
him,
The dagger trembled from its aim un-
duteous:
And she . . . oh, she — amazed and
soul-distraught,
And fainting in her whiteness like a
veil,
Slid down upon her knees, and, shuddering, thought
To hide — though in her heart — the
dagger pale!
She would have done it; but her hands
did fail
To hold the guilty steel, they shiv-
ered so;
And feeble, exhausted, unawares she
took
To gazing on the god, till, look by
look,
Her eyes with larger life did fill and
glow.
She saw his golden head alight with
curls.
She might have guessed their bright-
ness in the dark
By that ambrosial smell of heavenly
mark!
She saw the milky brow, more pure
than pearls,

The purple of the cheeks, divinely
sundered
By the globed ringlets, as they glided
free,
Some back, some forwards,— all so
radiantly,
That, as she watched them there,
she never wondered
To see the lamplight, where it
touched them, tremble:
On the god's shoulders, too, she
marked his wings
Shine faintly at the edges, and re-
semble
A flower that's near to blow. The
poet sings
And lover sighs, that love is fugi-
tive;
And certes, though these pinions lay
reposing,
The feathers on them seemed to stir
and live
As if by instinct, closing and unclos-
ing.
Meantime the god's fair body slum-
bered deep,
All worthy of Venus, in his shining
sleep;
While at the bed's foot lay the
quiver, bow,
And darts, — his arms of godhead.
Psyche gazed,
With eyes that drank the wonders
in, said, "Lo,
Be these my husband's arms?" and
straightway raised
An arrow from the quiver-case, and
tried
Its point against her finger: trem-
bling till
She pushed it in too deeply (foolish
bride!)
And made her blood some dewdrops
small distil,
And learnt to love Love, of her own
good will.

PSYCHE WAFTED BY ZEPHY-
RUS.

(METAMORPH., Lib. IV.)

WHILE Psyche wept upon the rock,
forsaken,
Alone, despairing, dreading, gradu-
ally

By Zephyrus she was inwraught and taken,
Still trembling, — like the lilies planted high, —
Through all her fair white limbs. Her vesture spread,
Her very bosom eddying with surprise,
He drew her slowly from the mountain-head,
And bore her down the valleys with wet eyes,
And laid her in the lap of a green dell As soft with grass and flowers as any nest,
With trees beside her, and a limpid well:
Yet Love was not far off from all that rest.

PSYCHE AND PAN.

(METAMORPH., Lib. V.)

THE gentle River, in her Cupid's honor,
Because he used to warm the very wave,
Did ripple aside, instead of closing on her,
And cast up Psyche, with a refluxion brave,
Upon the flowery bank, all sad and sinning.
Then Pan, the rural god, by chance was leaning
Along the brow of waters as they wound,
Kissing the reed-nymph till she sank to ground
And teaching, without knowledge of the meaning,
To run her voice in music after his
Down many a shifting note (the goats around,
In wandering pasture and most leaping bliss,
Drawn on to crop the river's flowery hair).
And as the hoary god beheld her there,
The poor, worn, fainting Psyche ! knowing all
The grief she suffered, he did gently call
Her name, and softly comfort her despair: —

"O wise, fair lady ! I am rough and rude,
And yet experienced through my weary age;
And if I read aright, as soothsayer should,
Thy faltering steps of heavy pilgrimage,
Thy paleness, deep as snow we cannot see
The roses through, — thy sighs of quick returning,
Thine eyes that seem themselves two souls in mourning, —
Thou lovest, girl, too well, and bitterly !
But hear me: rush no more to a headlong fall:
Seek no more deaths ! leave wail, lay sorrow down,
And pray the sovereign god; and use withal
Such prayer as best may suit a tender youth,
Well pleased to bend to flatteries from thy mouth,
And let them stir the myrtle of his crown."

— So spake the shepherd-god; and answer none
Gave Psyche in return; but silently She did him homage with a bended knee,
And took the onward path.

PSYCHE PROPITIATING CERES.

(METAMORPH., Lib. VI.)

THEN mother Ceres from afar beheld her.
While Psyche, touched, with reverent fingers meek,
The temple's scythes; and with a cry compelled her: —
" O wretched Psyche, Venus roams to seek
Thy wandering footsteps round the weary earth,
Anxious and maddened, and adjures thee forth
To accept the imputed pang, and let her wreak
Full vengeance with full force of deity !

Yet thou, forsooth, art in my temple here,
Touching my scythes, assuming my degree,
And daring to have thoughts that are not fear!"
— But Psyche clung to her feet, and as they moved
Rained tears along their track, tear dropped on tear,
And drew the dust on in her trailing locks,
And still, with passionate prayer,
the charge disapproved.—
"Now, by thy right hand's gathering from the shocks
Of golden corn, and by thy gladsome rites
Of harvest, and thy consecrated sights
Shut safe and mute in chests, and by the course
Of thy slave dragons, and the driving force
Of ploughs along Sicilian glebes profound,
By thy swift chariot, by thy steadfast ground,
By all those nuptial torches that departed
With thy lost daughter, and by those that shone
Back with her when she came again glad-hearted,
And by all other mysteries which are done
In silence at Eleusis, I beseech thee,
O Ceres! take some pity, and abstain
From giving to my soul extremer pain
Who am the wretched Psyche. Let me teach thee
A little mercy, and have thy leave to spend
A few days only in thy garnered corn,
Until that wrathful goddess, at the end,
Shall feel her hate grow mild, the longer borne;
Or till, alas! this faintness at my breast
Pass from me, and my spirit apprehend
From lifelong woe a breath-time hour of rest!"
— But Ceres answered, "I am moved indeed
By prayers so moist with tears, and would defend

The poor beseecher from more utter need;
But where old oaths, anterior ties, comineed,
I cannot fail to a sister, lie to a friend,
As Venus is to me. Depart with speed!"

PSYCHE AND THE EAGLE.

(METAMORPH., Lib. VI.)

BUT sovran Jove's rapacious bird, the regal High percher on the lightning, the great eagle, Drove down with rushing wings; and thinking how, By Cupid's help, he bore from Ida's brow A cup-boy for his master, he inclined To yield, in just return, an influence kind; The god being honored in his lady's woe. And thus the Bird wheeled downward from the track Gods follow gods in, to the level low Of that poor face of Psyche left in wrack. — "Now fie, thou simple girl!" the bird began; "For, if thou think to steal and carry back A drop of holiest stream that ever ran, No simpler thought, methinks, were found in man. What! know'st thou not these Stygian waters be Most holy, even to Jove? that as, on earth, Men swear by gods and by the thunder's worth, Even so the heavenly gods do utter forth Their oaths by Styx's flowing majesty? And yet one little urnful I agree To grant thy need!" Whereat, all hastily, He takes it, fills it from the willing wave, And bears it in his beak, incarnadined.

By the last Titan-prey he screamed
to have;
And, striking calmly out against the
wind
Vast wings on each side, there, where
Psyche stands,
He drops the urn down in her lifted
hands.

PSYCHE AND CERBERUS.

(METAMORPH., Lib. VI.)

A MIGHTY dog with three colossal
necks,
And heads in grand proportion;
vast as fear,
With jaws that bark the thunder out
that breaks
In most innocuous dread for ghosts
anear,
Who are safe in death from sorrow:
he reclines
Across the threshold of Queen Proserpine's
Dark-sweeping halls, and there, for
Pluto's spouse,
Doth guard the entrance of the empty
house.
When Psyche threw the cake to him,
once again
He howled up wildly from his hun-
ger-pain,
And was still after.

PSYCHE AND PROSERPINE.

(METAMORPH., Lib. VI.)

THEN Psyche entered in to Proser-
pine
In the dark house, and straightway
did decline
With meek denial the luxurious seat,
The liberal board for welcome stran-
gers spread,
But sate down lowly at the dark
queen's feet,
And told her tale, and brake her
oaten bread,
And when she had given the pyx in
humble duty,

And told how Venus did entreat
the queen
To fill it up with only one day's beau-
ty
She used in Hades, star-bright and
serene,
To beautify the Cyprian, who had
been
All spoilt with grief in nursing her
sick boy,
Then Proserpine, in malice and in joy,
Smiled in the shade, and took the
pyx, and put
A secret in it; and so, filled and
shut,
Gave it again to Psyche. Could she
tell
It held no beauty but a dream of
hell?

PSYCHE AND VENUS.

(METAMORPH., Lib. VI.)

AND Psyche brought to Venus what
was sent
By Pluto's spouse; the paler, that
she went
So low to seek it down the dark de-
scent.

MERCURY CARRIES PSYCHE TO
OLYMPUS.

(METAMORPH., Lib. VI.)

THEN Jove commanded the god Mer-
cury
To float up Psyche from the earth.
And she
Sprang at the first word, as the foun-
tain springs,
And shot up bright and rustling
through his wings.

MARRIAGE OF PSYCHE AND
CUPID.

(METAMORPH., Lib. VI.)

AND Jove's right hand approached
the ambrosial bowl
To Psycho's lips, that scarce dared
yet to smile:

"Drink, O my daughter, and acquaint thy soul
 With deathless uses, and be glad the while!
 No more shall Cupid leave thy lovely side:
 Thy marriage-joy begins for never-ending."
 While yet he spake, the nuptial feast supplied,
 The bridegroom on the festive couch was bending
 O'er Psyche in his bosom, Jove the same
 On Juno, and the other deities
 Alike ranged round. The rural cup-bearer came
 And poured Jove's nectar out with shining eyes,
 While Bacchus for the others did as much,
 And Vulcan spread the meal; and all the Hours
 Made all things purple with a sprinkle of flowers,
 Or roses chiefly, not to say the touch
 Of their sweet fingers; and the Graces glided
 Their balm around; and the Muses through the air
 Struck out clear voices, which were still divined
 By that divinest song Apollo there intoned to his lute; while Aphrodite fair
 Did float her beauty along the tune, and play
 The notes right with her feet. And thus the day
 Through every perfect mood of joy was carried.
 The Muses sang their chorus; Satyrus
 Did blow his pipes; Pan touched his reed: and thus
 At last where Cupid and his Psyche married.

FROM NONNUS.

HOW BACCHUS FINDS ARIADNE SLEEPING.

(DIONYSIACA, Lib. XLVII.)

WHEN Bacchus first beheld the desolate
 And sleeping Ariadne, wonder straight

Was mixed with love in his great golden eyes;
 He turned to his Bacchantes in surprise,
 And said with guarded voice, "Hush! strike no more
 Your brazen cymbals; keep those voices still
 Of voice and pipe; and, since ye stand before
 Queen Cypris, let her slumber as she will!
 And yet the cestus is not here in proof.
 A Grace, perhaps, whom sleep has stolen aloof:
 In which case, as the morning shines in view,
 Wake this Aglaia! — yet in Naxos, who
 Would veil a Grace so? Hush! And if that she
 Were Hebe, which of all the gods can be
 The pourer out of wine? or if we think
 She's like the shining moon by ocean's brink,
 The guide of herds, why, could she sleep without
 Endymion's breath on her cheek? or if I doubt
 Of silver-footed Thetis, used to tread
 These shores, even she (in reverence be it said)
 Has no such rosy beauty to dress deep
 With the blue waves. The Loxian goddess might
 Repose so from her hunting toil aright
 Beside the sea, since toil gives birth to sleep;
 But who would find her with her tunic loose,
 Thus? Stand off, Thracian! stand off! Do not leap,
 Not this way! Leave that piping, since I choose,
 O dearest Pan, and let Athénè rest!
 And yet if she be Pallas . . . truly guessed.
 Her lance is — where? her helm and aegis — where?"
 — As Bacchus closed, the miserable Fair
 Awoke at last, sprang upward from the sands,
 And gazing wild on that wild throng that stands

Around, around her, and no Theseus there !—
 Her voice went moaning over shore and sea,
 Beside the halcyon's cry; she called her love;
 She named her hero, and raged madly
 Against the brine of waters; and above,
 Sought the ship's track, and cursed the hours she slept;
 And still the chiefest execration swept
 Against Queen Paphia, mother of the ocean;
 And cursed and prayed by times in her emotion
 The winds all round. . . .

Her grief did make her glorious; her despair
 Adorned her with its weight. Poor wailing child !
 She looked like Venus when the goddess smiled
 At liberty of godship, debonair:
 Poor Ariadne ! and her eyelids fair
 Hid looks beneath them lent her by persuasion
 And every grace, with tears of love's own passion.
 She wept long; then she spake:
 “Sweet sleep did come
 While sweetest Theseus went. Oh, glad and dumb,
 I wish he had left me still ! for in my sleep
 I saw his Athens, and did gladly keep
 My new bride-state within my Theseus' hall;
 And heard the pomp of Hymen, and the call
 Of ‘Ariadne, Ariadne,’ sung
 In choral joy; and there with joy I hung
 Spring-blossoms round love's altar !
 ay, and wore
 A wreath myself; and felt him evermore,
 Oh, evermore beside me, with his mighty,
 Grave head bowed down in prayer to Aphrodite !
 Why, what a sweet, sweet dream !
 He went with it,
 And left me here unwedded where I sit !

Persuasion help me ! The dark night did make me
 A brideship the fair morning takes away;
 My love had left me when the hour did wake me;
 And while I dreamed of marriage, as I say,
 And blest it well, my blessed Theseus left me;
 And thus the sleep I loved so has bereft me.
 Speak to me, rocks, and tell thy grief to-day
 Who stole my love of Athens.” . . .

HOW BACCHUS COMFORTS ARIADNE.

(DIONYSIACA., Lib. XLVII.)

THEN Bacchus' subtle speech her sorrow crossed:
 “O maiden, dost thou mourn for having lost
 The false Athenian heart ? and dost thou still
 Take thought of Theseus, when thou mayst at will
 Have Bacchus for a husband ? Bacchus bright !
 A god in place of mortal ! Yes, and though
 The mortal youth be charming in thy sight,
 That man of Athens cannot strive below,
 In beauty and valor, with my deity !
 Thou'llt tell me of the labyrinthine dweller,
 The fierce man-bull he slew: I pray thee, be,
 Fair Ariadne, the true deed's true teller,
 And mention thy clew's help ! because, forsooth,
 Thine armed Athenian hero had not found
 A power to fight on that prodigious ground,
 Unless a lady in her rosy youth Had lingered near him; not to speak
 the truth
 Too definitely out till names be known ! Like Paphia's, Love's, and Ariadne's own.

Thou wilt not say that Athens can compare
With Æther, nor that Minos rules like Zeus,
Nor yet that Gnossus has such golden air
As high Olympus. Ha! for noble use
We came to Naxos! Love has well intended
To change thy bridegroom! Happy thou, defended
From entering in thy Theseus' earthly hall,
That thou mayst hear the laughter rise and fall
Instead, where Bacchus rules! Or wilt thou choose
A still-surpassing glory?—take it all,—
A heavenly house, Kronion's self for kin,—
A place where Cassiopea sits within Inferior light, for all her daughter's sake,
Since Perseus, even amid the stars, must take
Andromeda in chains ethereal!
But I will wreath thee, sweet, an astral crown,
And as my queen and spouse thou shalt be known;
Mine, the crown-lover's!" Thus, at length, he proved
His comfort on her; and the maid was moved;
And, casting Theseus' memory down the brine,
She straight received the troth of her divine,
Fair Bacchus; Love stood by to close the rite.
The marriage-chorus struck up clear and light,
Flowers sprouted fast about the chamber green,
And with spring-garlands on their heads, I ween,
The Orchomenian dancers came along,
And danced their rounds in Naxos to the song.
A Hamadryad sang a nuptial dirge
Right shrilly; and a Naiad sat beside
A fountain, with her bare foot shelving it,
And hymned of Ariadne, beauteous bride,

Whom thus the god of grapes had deified.
Ortygia sang out, louder than her wont,
An ode which Phœbus gave her to be tried,
And leapt in chorus, with her steadfast front,
While prophet Love, the stars have called a brother,
Burnt in his crown, and twined in one another
His love-flower with the purple roses, given
In type of that new crown assigned in heaven.

FROM HESIOD.

BACCHUS AND ARIADNE.

(THEOG. 947.)

THE golden-haired Bacchus did espouse
That fairest Ariadne, Minos' daughter,
And made her wifehood blossom in the house,
Where such protective gifts Kronion brought her,
Nor Death nor Age could find her when they sought her.

FROM EURIPIDES.

AURORA AND TITHONUS.

(TROADES, ANTISTROPHE, 853.)

LOVE, Love, who once didst pass the Dardan portals,
Because of heavenly passion!
Who once didst lift up Troy in exultation,
To mingle in thy boud the high immortals!
Love, turned from his own name
To Zeus' shame,
Can help no more at all.
And Eos' self, the fair, white-steeded morning,—
Her light which blesses other lands, returning,

Has changed to a gloomy pall !
 She looked across the land with eyes
 of amber ;
 She saw the city's fall ;
 She who, in pure embraces,
 Had held there, in the hymeneal
 chamber,
 Her children's father, bright Tithonus
 old,
 Whom the four steeds with starry
 brows and paces
 Bore on, snatched upward, on the car
 of gold,
 And with him, all the land's full hope
 of joy !
 The love-charms of the gods are vain
 for Troy.

NOTE.—Rendered after Mr. Burges's reading, in some respects, not quite all.

FROM HOMER.
 HECTOR AND ANDROMACHE.

(ILIADE, Lib. VI.)

SHE rushed to meet him: the nurse following
 Bore on her bosom the unsaddened child,
 A simple babe, prince Hector's well-loved son,
 Like a star shining when the world is dark.
 Scamandrius, Hector called him; but the rest
 Named him Astyanax, the city's prince,
 Because that Hector only, had saved Troy.
 He, when he saw his son, smiled silently;
 While, dropping tears, Andromache pressed on,
 And clung to his hand, and spake, and named his name.
 "Hector, my best one, thine own nobleness
 Must needs undo thee. Pity hast thou none
 For this young child and this most sad myself,
 Who soon shall be thy widow, since that soon

The Greeks will slay thee in the general rush;
 And then, for me, what refuge, of thee,
 But to go graveward ? Then, no more
 Shall touch me, as in the old times thou know'st.
 Grief only—grief ! I have no friend now,
 No mother mild. Achilles the vine,
 He slew my father, sacked his land Thebes,
 Cilicia's populous city, and slew king,
 Eetion—father ! — did not spoil thy corse,
 Because the Greek revered him in his soul,
 But burnt the body with its dædal arms,
 And poured the dust out gently. Round that tomb
 The Oreads, daughters of the goat-nursed Zeus,
 Tripped in a ring, and planted their green elms.
 There were seven brothers with me in the house,
 Who all went down to Hades in one day,—
 For he slew all, Achilles the divine, Famed for his swift feet,—slain among their herds
 Of cloven-footed bulls and flocking sheep !
 My mother too, who queened it o'er the woods
 Of Hippoplacia, he, with other spoil,
 Seized,—and, for golden ransom, freed too late,—
 Since, as she went home, arrowy Artemis
 Met her and slew her at my father's door.
 But—O my Hector, — thou art still to me
 Father and mother! — yes, and brother dear,
 O thou, who art my sweetest spouse beside !
 Come now, and take me into pity ! Stay
 I' the town here with us ! Do not make thy child
 An orphan, nor a widow thy poor wife !

Then up the people to the fig-tree,
where
 A city is most accessible, the
 wall
Not easy of assault! — for thrice
thereby
 A boldest Greeks have mounted to
 the breach, —
We Ajaxes, the famed Idomeneus,
sons of Atreus, and the noble
To one
ydeus, — whether taught by some
F: wise seer,
 by their own souls prompted and
 inspired."

"Great Hector answered: "Lady, for
these things
it is my part to care. And I fear
most
My Trojans, and their daughters, and
their wives,
Who through their long veils would
glance scorn at me
If, coward-like, I shunned the open
war.
Nor doth my own soul prompt me to
that end!
I learnt to be a brave man constantly,
And to fight foremost where my Tro-
jans fight,
And vindicate my father's glory and
mine —
because I know, by instinct and my
soul,
 he day comes that our sacred Troy
 must fall,
 and Priam and his people. Knowing
 which,
I have no such grief for all my Tro-
jans' sake,
For Hecuba's, for Priam's, our old
king,
Not for my brothers', who so many
and brave
Shall bite the dust before our ene-
mies, —
As, sweet, for *thee*! — to think some
mailed Greek
Shall lead thee weeping and deprive
thy life
Of the free sun-sight — that when
gone away
To Argos, thou shalt throw the dis-
taff there,
Not for thy uses — or shalt carry in-
stead
Upon thy loathing brow, as heavy as
doom,

The water of Greek wells — Messels'
own,
Or Hypereia's! — that some stander-
by,
Marking my tears fall, shall say, 'This
is she,
The wife of that same Hector who
fought best
Of all the Trojans, when all fought
for Troy' —
Ay! — and, so speaking, shall renew
thy pang
That, 'reft of him so named, thou
shouldst survive
To a slave's life! But earth shall
hide my corse
Ere that shriek sound, wherewith
thou art dragged from Troy."

Thus Hector spake, and stretched his
arms to his child.
Against the nurse's breast, with child-
ly cry,
The boy clung back, and shunned his
father's face,
And feared the glittering brass and
waving hair
Of the high helmet, nodding horror
down.
The father smiled, the mother could
not choose
But smile too. Then he lifted from
his brow
The helm, and set it on the ground to
shine:
Then kissed his dear child — raised
him with both arms,
And thus invoked Zeus and the gen-
eral gods: —

"Zeus, and all godships! grant this
boy of mine
To be the Trojans' help, as I my-
self, —
To live a brave life and rule well in
Troy!
Till men shall say, 'The son exceeds
the sire
By a far glory.' Let him bring home
spoil
Heroic, and make glad his mother's
heart."

With which prayer, to his wife's ex-
tended arms
He gave the child; and she received
him straight
To her bosom's fragrance — smiling up
her tears.

Hector gazed on her till his soul was moved;
Then softly touched her with his hand and spake:
“ My best one — 'ware of passion and excess
In any fear. There's no man in the world
Can send me to the grave apart from fate, —
And no man . . . sweet, I tell thee . . . can fly fate, —
No good nor bad man. Doom is self-fulfilled.
But now, go home, and ply thy woman's task
Of wheel and distaff! bid thy maidens haste
Their occupation. War's a care for men —
For all men born in Troy, and chief for me.”

Thus spake the noble Hector, and resumed
His crested helmet, while his spouse went home;
But as she went, still looked back lovingly,
Dropping the tears from her reverted face.

THE DAUGHTERS OF PANDARUS.

(Odyss., Lib. XX.)

AND so these daughters fair of Pandarus,
The whirlwinds took. The gods had slain their kin:
They were left orphans in their father's house.
And Aphrodite came to comfort them
With incense, luscious honey, and fragrant wine;
And Hera gave them beauty of face and soul
Beyond all women; purest Artemis
Endowed them with her stature and white grace;
And Pallas taught their hands to flash along
Her famous looms. Then, bright with deity,
Toward far Olympus, Aphrodite went

To ask of Zeus (who has his thunder-joys
And his full knowledge of man's mingled fate)
How best to crown those other gifts with love
And worthy marriage: but, what time she went,
The ravishing Harpies snatched the maidens away,
And gave them up, for all their loving eyes,
To serve the Furies who hate constantly.

ANOTHER VERSION.

So the storms bore the daughters of Pandarus out into thrall —
The gods slew their parents; the orphans were left in the hall.
And there, came, to feed their young lives, Aphrodite divine,
With the incense, the sweet-tasting honey, the sweet-smelling wine;
Hera brought them her wit above woman's, and beauty of face;
And pure Artemis gave them her stature, that form might have grace;
And Athene instructed their hand in her works of renown;
Then, afar to Olympus, divine Aphrodite moved on:
To complete other gifts, by uniting each girl to a mate,
She sought Zeus, who has joy in the thunder and knowledge of fate,
Whether mortals have good chance or ill. But the Harpies alate
In the storm came, and swept off the maidens, and gave them to wait,
With that love in their eyes, on the Furies who constantly hate.

FROM ANACREON.

ODE TO THE SWALLOW.

Thou indeed, little swallow,
A sweet yearly comer,
Art building a hollow
New nest every summer,
And straight dost depart
Where no gazing can follow,

Past Memphis, down Nile!
 Ah! but love all the while
 Builds his nest in my heart,
 Through the cold winter weeks:
 And as one love takes flight,
 Comes another, O swallow,
 In an egg warm and white,
 And another is callow.
 And the large gaping beaks
 Chirp all day and all night:
 And the loves who are older
 Help the young and the poor loves,
 And the young loves grown bolder
 Increase by the score loves —
 Why, what can be done?
 If a noise comes from one
 Can I bear all this rout of a hundred
 and more loves?

FROM HEINE.

[THE LAST TRANSLATION.]

ROME, 1860.

I.

I.

Out of my own great woe
 make my little songs,
 Which rustle their feathers in throngs,
 And beat on her heart even so.

II.

They found the way, for their part,
 Yet come again, and complain,
 Complain, and are not fain
 To say what they saw in her heart.

II.

I.

Art thou indeed so adverse?
 Art thou so changed indeed?
 against the woman who wrongs me,
 cry to the world in my need.

II.

O recreant lips unthankful,
 How could ye speak evil, say,
 Of the man who so well has kissed
 you
 on many a fortunate day?

III.

I.

My child, we were two children,
 Small, merry by childhood's law:
 We used to crawl to the hen-house,
 And hide ourselves in the straw.

II.

We crowed like cocks; and whenever
 The passers near us drew —
 Cock-a-doodle! they thought
 'Twas a real cock that crew.

III.

The boxes about our courtyard
 We carpeted to our mind,
 And lived there both together, —
 Kept house in a noble kind.

IV.

The neighbor's old cat often
 Came to pay us a visit:
 We made her a bow and courtesy,
 Each with a compliment in it.

V.

After her health we asked,
 Our care and regard to evince —
 (We have made the very same
 speeches
 To many an old cat since).

VI.

We also sate and wisely
 Discoursed, as old folks do,
 Complaining how all went better
 In those good times we knew, —

VII.

How love and truth and believing
 Had left the world to itself,
 And how so dear was the coffee,
 And how so rare was the pelf.

VIII.

The children's games are over,
 The rest is over with youth, —
 The world, the good games, the good
 times,
 The belief, and the love, and the
 truth.

IV.

I.

THOU lovest me not, thou lovest me
not!
'Tis scarcely worth a sigh:
Let me look in thy face, and no king
in his place
Is a gladder man than I.

II.

Thou hatest me well, thou hatest me
well—
Thy little red mouth has told:
Let it reach me a kiss, and, however
it is,
My child, I am well consoled.

V.

I.

MY own sweet love, if thou in the
grave,
The darksome grave, wilt be,
Then will I go down by the side, and
crave
Love-room for thee and me.

II.

I kiss and caress and press thee wild,
Thou still, thou cold, thou white!
I wail, I tremble, and weeping mild,
Turn to a corpse at the right.

III.

The dead stand up, the mi
calls,
They dance in airy swarms—
We two keep still where the
shade falls,
And I lie on in thine arms.

IV.

The dead stand up, the Judge
day
Bids such to weal or woe—
But nought shall trouble us wh
stay
Embraced and embracing bel

VI.

I.

THE years they come and go,
The races drop in the grave,
Yet never the love doth so,
Which here in my heart I have.

II.

Could I see thee but once, one d
And sink down so on my knee,
And die in thy sight while I say,
"Lady, I love but thee!"

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